THE SEA IS KIND

T. STURGE MOORE

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T. STURGE MOORE

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THE SEA IS KIND

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY

1899. THE VINEDRESSER AND OTHER POEMS
1901. APHRODITE AGAINST ARTEMIS
1903. ABSALOM
1903. DANÄE
1905. THE LITTLE SCHOOL
1906. POEMS
1911. MARIAMNE
1911. A SICILIAN IDYLL

PROSE

1899. THE CENTAUR AND THE BACCHANT FROM THE FRENCH BY MAURICE DE GUERIN
1900. ALTDORFER
1904. DURER
1906. CORREGGIO
1910. ART AND LIFE (FLAUBERT AND BLAKE)

THE SEA IS KIND
BY
T · STURGE · MOORE

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TO MICHAEL FIELD

IN MEMORY OF EDITH COOPER

Rumour of fame
Fanned her at noon of youth:
Instead, there came
Sorrow, suffering, and uncouth
Silence from those who praised aright
When, mocked by a name,
They thought her work showed a man's might.
Yet, as that darkness grew,
Courage made more of what kept seeming less
And, to her beauty true,
Here put on everlastingness.
She now, discerned, loved, admired, revered,
Though by too few—
Wherever else her spirit renew
Its radiant life endearing—lives on for us endeared.

THE SEA IS KIND

I. THE NYMPHS

EVARNE

Yes, I will stop and talk:
But urge not that old suit;
At best men are like rats
As nimble in the water as on land.

PLEXAURA

O sister of the Sea, they age, ail, die;
But they foresee it; each man patiently
Provides against that time with frugal zeal,
And by eliciting and fostering kindness
From children, neighbours, friends, yea, here or there,
A man succeeds, his farewell crowns his life.

EVARNE

These Greeks are best; they have some hardihood:
Their land with sea is kneaded up and leavened.
Yet how they feared those Persians—lied, and deceived
Each other! sold each other to a foe
Who showed more honour and more steadiness!

PLEXAURA

Their breed needs crossing yet, but has improved.

EVARNE

Gods have wasted passion
On women; nymphs on men:
The race, savage, cared but for food and shelter;
Cares but for wealth and power; never will care
For life's full beauty.

PLEXAURA

I oft have watched men well employed together:
Their perfidies and riots fled from mind,
For they expressed my gladdest hopes as when,
At length, the lips that only sucked or crowed

Utter two words—as when, with clutching arms
On staggering legs, my babe dared step on step.
EVARNE
Since thou hast yielded to a man's desire,
A milky mood toward men becomes thee, sister.
PLEXAURA
A touching sight, I find, groups of them anxious
With stone or wood to perfect ship or house—
To cart the harvest home before a storm
That threatens, burst: each
Given, accepted; all
Equalled by intent.
EVARNE
The peace their danger welds fissures ere dry.
PLEXAURA
True, each would rule,
Who, all as one, might retrench ignorance,
Defeating weight and distance and dense matter,
Then sort into attuned confederacy
The kind and lovely creatures of the earth,
Till it were gardened like this land of Greece.
EVARNE
Have they the means?
PLEXAURA
They supersede us, it is prophesied.
EVARNE
Look at them,—hasty, greedy, callous, warped,
Deceitful, headstrong, lethargic.
PLEXAURA
Look at them,—good-humoured, free with aid,
Patient in skill, improving on their best.
EVARNE
We of the sea helped save this land of Greece,—
I myself did so: but, doomed, why should we think
This Athens is a promise to the world,
A foretaste of some general excellence

To be attained by those bath-shunning hordes
Whose numbers and unlikeness threaten her?
PLEXAURA
Why were we doomed, unless to be excelled?
EVARNE
The destinies are crabb'd;
The girl, whose heart expects
An echo from her grandam's, may not be
More her own dupe than we in questioning them.
PLEXAURA
Infinite time and space leave equal room
For hope and for despair. In hearts like ours
One of the two must reign. No eloquence
Disguises which. Sister, thou art hope's.
EVARNE
Let that be so; why should I give myself
To these successors, in whom the best strength
Is featureless plasticity of soul
And inexterminable multitude?
I have been what I am a thousand years,
And shrink from thought of breeding by a man.
PLEXAURA
Not any man, but just one image of Hermes,
Untamed, delightful, thou, as I have, may.
EVARNE
No boy,—some grisled sailor
Hard as his knotted ropes,
Seasoned to endure a month's exhausting storm:
Such men have had my admiration; they,
Though I do not believe it, might win more.
PLEXAURA
We know men better; they have taken our land,
Save wild rough slopes, marshes and caverned crags,
But have reserved us groves paled in, kept sacred,
And paid us with fair temples, altars, stones
Inscribed with kindly thought—

Perfected lovingly to enhance our land
And link them to us with clear piety.
EVARNE
These Greeks!—but they are not a tithe of men.
PLEXAURA
Men yet may make the sea as fair as Greece,
With fleets of ships as handsome as a town,
Or prim like temples, on some lonely voyage.
EVARNE
More likely will they load it with filthy gaols
Crammed with slaves wincing from whip-handed thieves.
PLEXAURA
That too perhaps, but not forever, Sister.
EVARNE
Own to this. Have not centuries passed since thou
Hast climbed a hill
Whence ocean was not either viewed or smelt?
PLEXAURA
So long? Maybe.
EVARNE
Hark; un-sea-penetrated lands there are
Where dear men grovel. I can let thee know
Of what sort continental daimons are;
How they prompt worshippers and help their arts.
Revisiting yon battered wrecks, old Glaucus,
Only a few days since had fancy taken
By a sprawled timber god. It owned the scowl
Apter for intense anger than the leer
That wins for satyr, carved time out of mind,
Our laughter. Shapeless arm and leg were starred
Against four flat plank wings; it hung in chains
Over a Persian trireme's weather bow,
And, freed, cork-like led Glaucus to the air;
Who steered it next to this sequestered cove
Where, summer-long, holds school for young sea nymphs

His vast indulgence,—teaching origins,
And, through immeasurable theogonies,
Deducing patience and that sager kindness
Not fanciful about its object's merits
Which raw minds stumble at. I, with some,
My younger sisters, sunning on these sands,
Watched his refined and venerable beauty land
And drag that obscene idol from the waves.
He came and sat among us with a sigh
Which pleaded that coevals of the ocean
Should not be laughed at. Noon's untempered heat
Set steaming his strange prize : warping ere long
It uttered " Hoch ! " aloud : once then again.
First we but lazily laughed to find our drowse
Thus troubled; then this thing besmirched with red
Became so eloquent with rap and creak—
Now wild, now plaintive, now imperative—
That we were roused to wonder;
When from its navel rose a filament
Of ochre-coloured smoke that, as it wreathed
With vague and flowing lunges, made a few
Which half suggested how articulate arm
Is cranked and stretches in the act to yawn;
And surely soon there were twin ghostly members
Gesticulating o'er a phantom torso.
In lieu of again dissipating, this
Odd freak of shadowy coils and turbid gloom,
As one from kneeling rises, rose from off
The belly of that log,—solidified,—
Changed substance, even as water turns to ice,
Till swarthy Arab black as bronze stood there.
Moulded and knotted every limb and joint
To serve a rabid fury which the face
Expressed with beautiful precision. Down
His godship stepped; the doll with loud report,
As though from top to fork wedge-riven, lay

In separate halves. That handsome scowler smiled,
Then with a royal gesture of content
Addressed our wonder.

" Behold the lowering guide of that hot storm
" Whom Bedouins white-tunicked and black-cloaked
" Hope to resemble, when on featly-hooved
" And sooty-manéd steeds their dreaded hordes
" Break on Chaldea, Babylonia, Bashan.
" Intent to lift the new-bound sheaves of wheat,
" They ride through standing corn, rise in the stirrup,
" And laugh to watch the coward reaper's heels
" Compass a fine velocity, thread field-paths,
" Or leap the dykes of irrigated plains.
' But devastation from mine inroads stretches
" Across Euphrates further than they dare.
" The industrious Ninevite, the huckster grey
" With watching scored tale lengthen down his wall
" Beneath his hated Median debtor's name,
" Dread me, and hang near casement, over door,
" To guard each southward-facing aperture,
" Rude effigies smaller than this of me.—
" Charm bootless 'gainst my veering pillared dust
" Which chokes each sluice in vainly watered gardens,
" Dessicates the velvet pudency of roses,
" And leaves green gummy tendrils like to naught
" But ravelled dry and dusty ends of cord;
" Clamming the ox's mouth, cementing up
" The bleeding nostrils of the terrified horse,—
" Hissing through shutters, cascading through smoke vents,
" Appalling thought and hope. Down tent and shed
" Are slammed, snap go tall trees : the lion's lord,
" I, hoarse with mirth, arrive, dance and pass on.

" Thereafter idol-makers drive brisk trade,
" Are primed with eloquence about my ways,—
" How sure to swerve aside or face about
" My wrath on meeting with its proper scowl.
" Each outward fleering image of mine ire
" Convinces me that there, an honoured guest,
" I lodge already; vain else were bolt and hinge.
" The wary owner's house I skirt around,
" And that invade where some imprudent fool
" Has thought too long on what mine image costs,
" Or braved my shoulder with stout staple and bar.
" For wider knowledge and travel the itch came
" To me who witnessed Xerxes massing troops:
" Then to the smallest of my shapes transformed,
" A black and brittle flea, I cabin found,
" (Taking advantage of a votary
" Who'd bought this larger scarecrow for his ship)
" Deep in the worm-drilled timber of its flanks.
" Enough has seen and suffered one who hates
" Cold dampness and knows now what drowning means.

" Your Persian worships no god, save the sun
" Who never walks on earth: but in Greek ports
" I have espied gods busied among men:—
" Seen ye whose place of revel is the sea
" Anxious a battle should be so and so's.
" One goddess (caped in azure cloth befringed
" With living snakes, while from its centre yelled,
" Sick with fierce pain, a feminine despair,
" Whose beauty still subsisting froze the blood)
" Appeared upon the trireme which stove ours,
" Tall as its mast, and with terrific lance
" Drave back our consorts, while we sank unhelped.
" The supposed favourite of a distant sun,
" Throned on that high brow called Heracleon,

" Beneath his gilded parasol fumed white
" To watch his navy shattered and dispersed;
" While she I speak of, like a piece of sky,
" Descended all a-thrill to set earth right,
" Stooped and sage-whispered her Themistocles.

" Farewell, ye humid daimons.
" Allied with unkinged ship-builders enjoy
" This beryl desert, restless, cold and wet.
" My home is stifling motionless dumb sand
" Which only at my bidding mounts the wind! "
With that, upright and rigid, his form rose, —
Stiff feet down stretched, finger and thumb-tips poised
Upon the pelvic crest of either hip,—
Slowly at first but gathering impetus
Till toward the zenith like bird-bolt he shot;
His shape became a dot, that dot a speck,
That speck invisible.
PLEXAURA
What dire aliens
Yet have divine strength and our grace to escape
From visible bonds and work on unperceived!
EVARNE
Look, yonder lie the two halves of his image.
PLEXAURA
But what said Glaucus?
EVARNE
Sighed first, and stroked his beard; at length rose up,
Turned gravely seawards, murmured, and then spoke:
" Behold *it* moves and changeth like a face—
" Is vaster than the vastest tract of sand—
" Has shaped our natures, and will yet mould others
" Nearer its heart than we;
" For even my wisdom worships darkling still.

" Though I to you seem of an equal date,
" This face was once a child's, *that* never younger
" Than when to-day the youngest of you found
" Her yet more frolick play-fellow in it.
" Nothing shall ever soil it; battles, wrecks,
" Though grosser than this fight of Salamis,
" Shall never so oppress its deep clear womb
" To spoil its smile, or take from its grand rage
" That unmalignant uncalculating force
" Which by a sheer integrity shames plans;
" For they at best serve some poor sect of hearts."

PLEXAURA

Deep thanks for thy report. Kiss we farewell.

EVARNE

Another kiss, but with it a few words.
Sister, the ocean in me loathes that thought
Of child-bearing by man.
They call the mingled nature " Hero," we
The pure divine.
Powers of the air bred thee from pregnant earth;
I feel myself
Fathered and mothered both out of the wave:
And though I muse with pleasure on ships—on
Their builders—on their handling, yet no germ
Of such tumultuous prelude swells in me,
As, ere I followed Triton to a cave,
Taught me my tenderness
Might ripen to a mother's.

PLEXAURA

I'll not persuade thee, for thou art persuaded:
The occasion will reveal to thee my foresight,
Fare thee well.

EVARNE

And thou fare better than thy prophecy.

II. GOATHERD AND SHEPHERD

MENALCAS

He saw but would avoid me! Eucritos, Hoy!
Escape thus thou shalt not! Come home with me.

EUCRITOS

Forgive me; for this once!

MENALCAS

Friends must not pass without exchanging news.

EUCRITOS

Another day.

MENALCAS

Thou art in love. Ho, ho!
Tell me about it! Thou art full; feed me!
Then we will in and eat together.

EUCRITOS

No!

MENALCAS

Sit thee down here; rug-shaped, this willow's shade
Is deep with springy parsley as bear's coat.

EUCRITOS

Menalcas,—

MENALCAS

Come, boy, whisper if thou list.

EUCRITOS

The destinies intend me for the sea:
Mine is no herdsman's blood, but drives me hence;
No shepherdess will ever nurse my son.
Thou hearest salt-water lap the rocks down there;
I hear it from a thousand bights and bays.
My pulse leaps with the waves and calms with them;
I must to Athens, that great home of ships.

MENALCAS

I looked for raving, praise of some girl's eye!

EUCRITOS

Thou knowest, Menalcas,
I built my hut not sheltered but exposed,

Round not right-angled.
A separate window like a mouth to breathe,
No matter whence the breeze might blow,--
A separate window like an eye to watch
From off the headland lawn that prompting wink
Of Ocean musing " Why," wherever he
May glimpse me at some pitiable task.
Long sea arms reach behind me, and small hills
Have waded half across the bay in front,
Dividing my horizon many times
But leaving every wind an open gate.
I've sold my sheep and try to thrive off goats.
MENALCAS
Goats give far less trouble;
And, though they may not yield so much at best,
There is not half the risk is run with sheep.
EUCRITOS
Menalcas, thou hast seen those poplar poles,
Each a dhow's mast deep driven in the soil,
Ten to the round of plastered wattled wall;
The wide-meshed rope-net weighted with huge stones
Which dangling just beneath the salient eaves
Secures the thatch in the hurricane's despite.
I love my hut;
Yet my heart tells me it is not a ship.
MENALCAS
To buy sails and build vessel would cost more.
EUCRITOS
Searched by the moonlight slanting through its door,
Menalcas, I have seen my home's one room
Aglint with shells that serve for platter and bowl;
The model ship that hangs behind the altar
Enshrined, with tanned nets cloudily festooned;
That bunch of corals pendant from the roof
Like blood some wounded god shed in salt water,

Which there branched into fans of clotted veins
To thrill henceforth with ocean's passion or health,—
My treasures all, in miniature I saw them
Crowded into a mirror small, round, deep,
And pleased to hold them,—even a sea-nymph's eye.
I sate beside her on my bed, Menalcas,
And listened to her wonder-laden talk.

MENALCAS

What was her name?

EUCRITOS

Hadst thou the gift, Menalcas,
By peering through the portal of mine eye,
The little double of her perfectness
That there has made a home and glides about
Would make thee wiser than ever my words shall.

MENALCAS

Yet tell her name.

EUCRITOS

Attired in thin veiling,
Green and gold-hemmed and cockle-brooched, with groups
Of pleats whose elegance from air to wave,
From wet to dry, undraggled passes, while
Through them, like drowned snow in a pool, broad cheek
Of limb or torso surges, gleams, turns, dives;—
She lives within that web-bemimicked sea
As large white fish flow on, now near, now deep.

MENALCAS

Her name, her name, her name!

EUCRITOS

Why clamour thus?
These lips, though they had touched hers, never asked it.

MENALCAS

Dead women are there who return by night;

Their love is mortal!
Some rival goat-herd paid a witch, and hopes
To see thy manhood melt from off thy bones.
EUCRITOS
This was a Nereid of blood divine,
Who two long nights enchanted me with stories,—
Sea-battle or lorn sailor bound to wreckage,—
Deeds such as only eyes like hers have watched.
Enduring courage, inexhaustible effort,
Such as redeemed Ulysses from nine deaths,
Had wrought her to prompt admiration of man,
Till to watch lad at sundown set his nets
Or in the morning hauling them ashore,
Though he were drowned in peace, reminded her
Of men whose mettle out-wore days of storm,—
Of men who fought outnumbered one to seven.
Her thoughts from me harked back to Salamis
And so absorbed her
That unaware she floated near my skiff,
Was by the current well-nigh borne against it
Before she knew that I had seen, had loved her.
Nor was she sad to lodge with me, for I
Received the influx of her very spirit
Until meseemed we should achieve one soul
And move together with a single impulse.
Herd goats? No! my life waits for me out there.
MENALCAS
Was this that thing so rarely scene, a nymph?
We hang their praise on tablets in large caves:
In some an altar or a statue stands,
And wenches dedicate their trinkets to them,
Hoping they will cajole the god of storms
Or lure shoals where a comely youth drags net.
Yet oft while woman sleeps her phantom walks,
Obedient to some witch, goes on an errand

The poor fool slumbering dreams not of at all,
Or sees performed in fragments much confused.
EUCRITOS
Peace to thy fears of witchcraft. Here a mind
Akin to Homer's moved in living words.
MENALCAS
Women have souls so easily unmoored
That drift away on hearing wise charm chanted.
Lads of thy years so easily are duped.
Some influence from the meteor-laden night
Sinks like a plummet through a mile of sea
And roots and twines and stirreth 'mid their hair.
They rove for days as though a star did stray
And they must follow under it everywhere;
Mistaking thoughts for things and hopes for deeds,
Till some at last recount what never happened
With all the eloquence experience gives.
EUCRITOS
No matter whether this took place or not,
I sell my goats and land and go seafaring.
MENALCAS
Doubt not I shall have heard about some girl
Who dreamed she passed those two nights in thy hut,
Ere thou hast reached the haven at Piraeus.
EUCRITOS
Farewell, Menalcas, I must find a buyer.
MENALCAS
Tell me a little first what thy nymph said.
EUCRITOS
Thou hast no credit for things so divine.
MENALCAS
Nay, nay, I swear!
EUCRITOS
A dirty sorceress
That mumbles in a cave at slave-girl's bidding
Could dictate words that I'd repeat to thee?

MENALCAS
Eucritos dear, I vow my heart doth ache
To think this the last time we two confer.
Wed it to memory with rare nymphly lore.
EUCRITOS
I cannot look at thee and think of her.
MENALCAS
Then gaze into the brook; I'll be forgotten.
EUCRITOS
Menalcas, see, a frog squats on that stone
And holds his head as thou dost, pondering
On some low explanation for high things.
Laugh not so loud! he hears thee! Hush! his thought
Had all but pleased him. There, we've put him out.
What grace he gains from swimming! 'tis the water
Compels his nature to move nattily.
Who'ld walk if he could swim? Who'ld swim if he
Could sail?
MENALCAS
Who'ld sail if he could fly?
EUCRITOS
I:
For water better cradles thoughts I woo.
MENALCAS
But thou hast never steered on wide-spread wings.
EUCRITOS
An eagle soaring on a day like this
Views everything a vast horizon laps;
But keel that slips across this dimpled bay
Glides over mines of mystery unexplored.
The coaster waits to see beyond the cape
An unprefigured stretch of beach or cliff:
The over-towering sight discovers nought.
How sad and weary seems the king of birds!
Contrast with him yon kinglet ever peeping

Into dim labyrinths pillared with stalks
Of mallow and loosestrife. Thy mind, Menalcas,
Sated like eagle's ken
With general conclusions
Shuts out all expectation from thy life.
MENALCAS
Well, well, report thy goddess; let me feast
At second-hand on what you wrens discover.
EUCRITOS
Thou art a beggar to me for my dreams:
This exquisite event that's mine to tell,
For thee a dream remembered, is for me
Very yesterday.
MENALCAS
I wait, like boy in his
A first-time-borrowed skiff, what lies beyond
The promontory of thy next digression.
EUCRITOS
Menalcas, she caught the gunnel, found her feet,
And stood beside my shallop on the sand.
The ripples toying her dark tresses tried
To strand their ends like sea-weed on her breast
And sometimes seemed to yearn up towards her throat.
" O beautiful goddess, how I love thy hands
That have in sunken ships restored the order
Which violent storm and panic had confounded."
" Dear youth, we dwellers in the deep are strange."
She paused, yet her dark eyes consoled me for
The discontinuance of that breathéd music.
She sighed and proved regretfulness divine.
" Immortal lips are wary of fond vows:
They give, but never promise." Then her smile
Gave all the happiness my heart could hold:
" I leave thee now not to bereave thee later."
How dared I, O Menalcas, if my fate

Is not inspired vastly, how dared I
Throwing one arm round her, swing o'er the stern
And hold her while we swayed above our feet
Weightless in water; then toward shore
Draw her, but half reluctant? There are times
When sense is captured by the tyrannous will,
Forbid to know what actions are performed,
And isolated from its whereabouts.
The darkening dusk then helped my thought suspend
Perception, that her words might be well mused,
" They give but never promise."
Due to the frailty of our nature is it
That human spouses promise.
In gods joy dreads not but greets danger, is
Intensified by solitude:
Being the simplest, surest, purest,
Most persuasive and securest
Self-assertion;
Delicate as gorgeous mealy wings are,
Brave as hymns that lark up-towered sings are.
Self-desertion,
Impossible to joy,
Never tempted god alloy
Fidelity to good, because
He or she deserted was.
Crowned with this interpretation thought
Released my senses, which discovered then
How we in step paced toward tall quiet trees
That filled the gloaming with their patient presence.
Her feet aware of grass, she stopped, and I
Knelt in mute worship there. " Lad, be warned! "
At that my tongue could help me:
" I do not ask what man from woman craves,
Submission, faith, toil; since for these they look
So soon as troubles and children intervene,

However they were blinded with delight
When first they found their pleasure kindle hers.
No, I have watched them, questioned them, and turned,
Resolved to live out there.
The welcoming silence of still virgin strands,
Islands none have sailed to,
Unentered estuaries,
Untalked of birds and beasts and folk remote,
Whose speech perplexes those who know most tongues,—
All that lies out of reach for anchored hearts
Calls and inveigles and bewitches mine.
How can a rover promise his return?
Ulysses after twenty years came back,
But could he rest?
Penelope died lonely.
Unwilling he departed that first time;
The second time his reason could not bind
An imperious will to go.
Travel begot the taste in him:
In me desire enforces
Travel."

A finger on its casket's hidden spring
Revealeth not prized gem more suddenly
Than these words freed the frankness of her mind.
" Then we are lovers!
" Flowers breathe round us by the dark concealed.
" I have passed twinkling shoals of baby fish,
" Myriads on myriads replenishing the gulfs
" For all the waste and slaughter of the year.
" When scent from cowslip meads is borne off shore
" Our youth renews itself, we leave the depths
" And come to gaze on wild fruit-trees in bloom.
" Up and down the many-terraced hills
" Like lacy veils dropped by Olympian brides

" They hang, from soiling earth
" Held off by demon's arm,
" Till Hermes down or Eros, Psyche bidding,
" Descend to fetch them back.
"Great Ocean's heart grows human, tender tears
" Surprise our steady lids and mist the sense
" That pity dims not in the murderous battle . . .
" Hark ! "
We paced the steep path up and up through pines;
And she did pause to leave the nightingale
The whole attentiveness
Of that rapt neighbourhood.

" There is a sorcery in well-loved words :
" But unintelligible music still
" Probes to the buried Titan in the heart,
" Whose strength, the vastness of forgotten life,
" Suffers but is not dead;
" Tune stirs him as no thought of ours, or aught
" Mere comprehension grasps, can him disquiet,"
She, the bird pausing, said.
Then he once more renewed
That vocal ebullition of his soul.
The moon had risen ere we reached my hearth,
Where I set forth a meal of curds and whey,
Bright water and dry bread.
MENALCAS
Come in, I can prepare a better feast !
EUCRITOS
The weight of memory oppresseth me,—
Now thou shalt hear or never. O Menalcas,
When we had eaten it was I who talked,
—Alas, I fear, not well, wasting rare hours,
Preyed on by a glib fever.
MENALCAS
It was but fitting.
Women must always listen while men woo;

Man, once they have been won.
And the male patience bears the sorer trial :
Absence and death alone afford him refuge,
But she need only yield to quiet us.

EUCRITOS

I shall go home, Menalcas : Life's dried figs
And raisins may stave hunger off, but they
Disgust when introduced among fresh fruit.
An adage, aye, an adage, priceless wisdom :—
Yet every wrinkled face can belch an hundred
Without having wisely lived a single day.

MENALCAS

Forgive me, Eucritos. Come, renew thy spell,
It held me tranced. My heart is parched for more.

EUCRITOS

Words can hide thought.

MENALCAS

Mine undress kind truth. Lead, for I follow,
Leaving behind that pedlar's pack, experience.
I will sleep waking and indeed regret
Ever to have been shaken out of youth.

EUCRITOS

" I give thee tryst," she said at point of day,
" Where those who visit the Hesperides
" Must beach their prows; and hope to show thee there
" A small girl nymph, thy daughter : or my son
" Confide unto his hero-father's care
" That thou mayst train him to be worthy me."
Straight in a vision I, the while she spoke,
Saw children playing naked on fair sands
When all their glee was hushed by a dark fear,—
For, ship-wrecked, I was landing where they stood.
They fled, I followed : and in a cave beheld
'Mid other nymphs with smaller babes, my spouse,—
Whereat I wept for that prospected bliss :
And she, grown loth to part from me, then promised

To come again at evening from the sea.
Preferred before the Tritons! favoured as gods are!
I think I tried to milk the goat last milked
Instead of those loud bleating for relief;
'Tis like I slept upright beside the stack,
Shouldered my fork without the truss of fodder
I went to fetch. Meseemed the day had passed
As we perceive that centuries have glided;
Yet cannot guess one hundredth thousandth part
Of what marked them important for the dead.
I know the adorable evening, softly flushed,
Found me upon the shore with dancing feet
And hands that clasped themselves above my head,
Then grasped these ribs as they would rend them
open
And cool my heart in that delicious sea.
From afar between two islets
—Though still inaudible,
Compelling an ecstatic supposition,
Torturing and tantalizing hearing,
Delivering Hope from Panic's fevered arms
Till she escaped and ran
White naked Certainty
On to my bosom,—
A song,
My nymph's song,
Came to me;
Came through the fainted
Hush of heat-cloyed air;
Above
The sighed reviving of its breathing,
The wide bay's liquid murmur,
Lapping of near ripples;
Above
The thudding of my pulses;
That dear approach
Of nimble trills

With lucky well-timed pauses
Drew me out swimming
Till last her dripping face met mine in laughter.

All is well, Menalcas, all is well;
But I have no words left
And yearn to be alone.
Only mark this :—
The Gods themselves did fight at Salamis;
Pallas Athene loves and honours sailors;
Like those long polished lanes
That cross the ocean between changing winds,
Direct the course that she inspires.
There is no place for skulking on the sea.
Let thieves and cozeners hug the shore;
Let them not trust that heavy cloak of rain,
That veil of mist, that wall of fog.—
These rise, these lift, are winged capricious things,
Will neither shield your merchant nor your pirate.
On land roads up and down and crook and turn,
Are masked by trees and foul with mud. There
Let robber and huckster lurk and dodge and quarrel!

MENALCAS

And yet those truthful Persians were defeated,
Who sailed straight on and used no strategy!

EUCRITOS

Ha, ha, I see them founder!
Self-constituted rivals of the sun,
Their suzerainty must be wide as his :
And having bragged, they bided by it moveless;
This was their lie.
An insult to all gods whose eyes behold
Not only what we see, but things to come,
Things vanished, things remote,
And all the invisible.
With emblematical rods
These landsmen thrashed the sea;

With emblematical chains
Had manacled Poseidon's element,
Belying their scant human nature,
Pretending inbred power :—
No falseness else is comparable with theirs !

Look on this cutlass' edge
Long enough from tip to hilt !
From cradle to grave
Such and so fine division cleaves
The quite lost from the sheer unknown.
Parting with her I found it keen :
Two perfect nights fell on one side
And *now* was *now without her*. On
The other side wild-picturing Hope
Could no more stretch a hand than through
A cliff of adamant.
This easeful hour divides our lives
As cleanly as that crisis :
To those alert each moment's critical.
For while men foot this razor's edge of Time
Their actions take two only shapes,—
One happiness, the other misery ;
And both are met in danger, both in peace.

Mark : trireme, tartan, boat and skiff
Epitomize state, household, friendship, health.
As heroes in them man should always bear him.
Each present moment skims
Those vast unsounded deeps
Which isolate life's hazardous intent.
No more than boatswain dare remove a plank
And peer down through her bottom at strange fish,
Can man cut trap into that vast reserve
Of strong withheld contrivance. Here we ride
Ignoring all ; its means, its goal, its character,
Its origin ; what service, if it serve,

It renders; to what purpose in what mind?
Or whether lives be ripples to some wind,
Or whether thought reflected from their tilt
Distort Hyperion wisdom. Man has built
Polities, laws, customs, disciplines,
Whose shapeliness with admiration wins
Perpetuation and improvement too,
Even as of hull curves those best-planned are new.
Hence Pallas holds in her mind's eye for ever
Sea-craft and all who handle them like masters.
MENALCAS
There's a fine gush of notions!
EUCRITOS
Hers, but spoiled,
Mere tatters of things she said.
MENALCAS
How came they in the talk of whispering lovers?
I looked for raving over a nymph's love skill.
EUCRITOS
We even forgot our joys in admiration . . .
Sea-battles she had shared in!
MENALCAS
What, Salamis?
EUCRITOS
Not from Eleusis and the Acropolis only
Came invisible aid,
But Ocean helped those Greeks.
She whom mine arms have folded
Sat on the sea-floor underneath our fleet,
Bowed with anxiety, brow pressed on knees,
Hair serpenting round feet, until her phantom
Detached itself and gained the air above:
Where, stoled in finer tissue than Arachne's,
In semblance of a haughty queen of eld,
It, despite broad day visible, audible,
Tarred on the Greeks
Who hesitated to attack their foe:—

" How long will ye backwater? "
The captains answered with one loud " Advance! "
And right against the Persian flank sped out:
Crashing upon those brittle tiers of sweeps
Rammed larboard his slow over-crowded hulls,
And, of his compact files of glittering ships,
Dividing them, made two disordered mobs:
While she,
Recovering natural sight, beheld our shadows
Like those of clouds which scour a windy plain
Scud from behind before
Over the sand and sea-wrack.
And as they distanced,
Raising her late-tranced eyes,
Might watch their black keels flock, enormous eagles,
Three hundred banded,—each behaloed round
And streamered with its coruscating foam—
On toward that larger green-beclouding phalanx,—
Become confused with it.
Then, then as feathers fall
When osprey attacks heron,
Slain men as slowly,
Though weighted with much armour,
Turned, twirled like down in air.
Thus in that Persian autumn
The fall of men began:
As dead bird leaf-resisted
Shot on tall plane-tree's top,
Down, never truly stopping,
Through green translucence dropping,
They often seemed to stop.

MENALCAS

Did she so chant?

EUCRITOS

At best my voice remembers hers but ill.
All, all drifts from me like disabled ship,
Cumbered with dead and dying, who mend not

Hacked rigging and caulk not those thirsty leaks.
MENALCAS
Songs of unusual lilt
Are hardest to recall.
EUCRITOS
Death gnaws within man both at mind and heart
Till he have leave to batten on the rest.
MENALCAS
Shake off these thoughts; thou hast not one white hair.
EUCRITOS
Though age be nearer thee, can any know
How nigh death lurk? She put these thoughts to me,
And urged me act, suffer, and be used.
What long and indefatigable days
Swallows pass on the wing!
Listlessness is not peace,—
Peace is for quite clean bones: they have it now,
Though in their homes at cruel gods they fretted,
Those haters of the sea.
MENALCAS
Salt water breedeth gods are none too gentle.
EUCRITOS
Blaspheme not thou, Menalcas, or I slay
The Greek whose ears have heard all I have told
Without a seaward grateful heart.
MENALCAS
Come, sheathe that cutlass, lad; I'll not blaspheme,
But honour even my roughest friends and patrons.
EUCRITOS
I faint! Recounting her grand talk devours
My heart and sucks my veins. Let's eat, Menalcas.
MENALCAS
Yea, lad, and drink; I have a skin of wine.
EUCRITOS
And I, Menalcas, thirst for the whole sea.

III. THE BARGAINERS

MENALCAS (to his dog)
Where is he, Lion? Quiet! Wouldst fright his sleep?
EUCRITOS
I was awake.
MENALCAS
I'm glad;
Slumber so rich as thine 'twere ill to break.
EUCRITOS
Slight not the fortune of a luckier man;
Thou know'st it at all points not like a dream.
MENALCAS
The lucky man, indeed, that can lie here,
While I must fold my flock and milk mine ewes.
EUCRITOS
Thou wouldst none of my help.
MENALCAS
Goats can wait longer.
EUCRITOS
Lampas had charge to tend them.
MENALCAS
Hast filled a nap kissing air? or, soft-eyed,
Smiled while the first star brightened?
EUCRITOS
Menalcas, sell thy sheep and join with me
To buy a tartan with broad-striped lateen.
MENALCAS
I've thought of it.
EUCRITOS
Fortunes are made at sea.
MENALCAS
And lost.
EUCRITOS
Not ours; we shall be favoured.

MENALCAS
Lad, that's not sure. . . . But I'm agog to hear
Yet more about those nights of nymph-hugging.
EUCRITOS
First promise to go partners in a ship.
MENALCAS
Steady ! that needs maturely pondering on.
EUCRITOS
A cargo sold oft double-pays its cost :
We soon might run a larger craft and hire
A crew.
MENALCAS
The more we have the more we risk.
EUCRITOS
" The sea is kind."
MENALCAS
Are shark and tempest kind?
EUCRITOS
Thou knowest Diocles' song of Danaë.
MENALCAS
No, but sing it; for any song of his
I'll warrant meet to flush thy memory
With recollection of those midnight hours.
EUCRITOS (chanting)
" There is no kindlier cradle for your mood,
Young lovers dear, than open boat at large;
Dream the girl mother and her babe there; brood
O'er Danaë, the wide sea's delicate charge.

Think, all the boat she had was just a chest,
While all her sail spread but to let breeze through,
(Being long flapping hair); and all her crew
That babe who nuzzled at her domèd breast;

Her only sweeps, arms trimly turned and bladed
With playful tender hands; never a rope,

Never a mast which through the gale should slope
In eager haste. Her never pilot aided,

Yet she thrid shoals, did tack and foil the wind.
Mere beauty was her cargo, not for sale,
None 'neath tarpaulin stowed, none in a bale,
But all on deck : and was not the sea kind? "
MENALCAS
Boy, thou art bent on searching quayless gulfs
For thy love-child and its bewitching dam,
And pine thou wouldst to ply where profit teems
From bustling port to port.
EUCRITOS
There's time for both;
At least a dozen years in careful traffic
Must fit me out.
MENALCAS
Was thy nymph never playful in thine arms?
EUCRITOS
Thou shouldst be rich before we burnt our bond.
MENALCAS
Let that bide. Come! Thy nymph?
EUCRITOS
I can but wait
Sign from her, since our son could not be ripe
To rough it aboard ship, younger than twelve.
MENALCAS
'Twas very strange never to ask her name.
EUCRITOS
I'll tell it thee, if but thou wilt go partners.
MENALCAS
Ho, ho! thou saidst thou hadst not asked it?
EUCRITOS
She told it though.
MENALCAS
What was it then?

EUCRITOS
Thou thinkst in solid truth of a sea-life?
MENALCAS
I'v half a mind to spend my summers sailing.
EUCRITOS
Wilt venture on sea-traffick all we have?
MENALCAS
Let's reckon up our means.—Hush, Lion.—Who
Strays hither after dark?
FEMALE VOICE WITHOUT
Menalcas!
MENALCAS
Proto?
(as a woman comes through the dusk)
Why, what time of day next, lass?
PROTO
Menalcas, neighbour Myrson is persuaded;
Says, though he owed my husband a shrewd grudge,
He could not wish him worse than just stone dead,
And his wife married to a man like thee.
His gain chimes in with ours
As I was sure it did.
In short, thou'lt have the five fields at thine offer
All save the west-most strip;
And as to-morrow is the three months' market. . . .
MENALCAS
I will not sleep to-night.
At dawn my sheep shall cross the dim agora—
Eucritos, this decides me:
We've had a mind for one bed these three years,
But the Gods frowned. Her land outyields mine ten-
fold,
Yet lies too distant to be worked as one.
Now all is easy as kiss my hand: I sell,
And join my having, field by field, to hers,
Making a grand farm of it.

Sorry, my lad, but look!
But see! this quean never melts into air!
There's a plump arm!
PROTO
The moon rises: walk with me to the lane;
I've left the mule cart under Battos' charge,
And must be home ere day.
MENALCAS
Eucritos, farewell:
Good dreams console thee—Proto, his arms at night
So crave employment that he is convinced
A sea nymph visits him.
PROTO (as she and Menalcas move away through the darkness)
Manners, Menalcas! we are not spoused yet.
EUCRITOS (rousing himself)
I knew his heart was clay when first he hailed me:
—Evarne, pardon me these wasted hours.
(turning away)
Yon seas house many a nymph,—Zeus, let one be
A happy, ever happier, mother by me.
Those waters heave and swell
And many a tale to their countless hearers tell,—
Zeus, may they use for me their grandest tone
And mean, wherever they moan,
That courage, effort and health
Are more than life and more than wealth.

TO SYBIL PYE

The following poems are gratefully dedicated because she, when mistress of The Little School, wished them written for, and brought them home to children.

BEAUTIFUL MEALS

How nice it is to eat!
All creatures love it so,
That they who first did spread,
Ere breaking bread,
A cloth like level snow,
Were right, I know.

And they were wise and sweet
Who, glad that meats taste good,
Used speech in an arch style,
And oft would smile
To raise the cheerful mood,
While at their food.

And those who first, so neat,
Placed fork and knife quite straight,
The glass on the right hand;
And all, as planned,
Each day set round the plate,—
Be their praise great!

For then, their hearts being light,
They plucked hedge-posies bright—
Flowers who, their scent being sweet,
Give nose and eye a treat:
'Twas they, my heart can tell,
Not eating fast but well,
Who wove the spell
Which finds me every day,
And makes each meal-time gay;
I know 'twas they.

WIND'S WORK

Kate rose up early as fresh as a lark,
Almost in time to see vanish the dark;
Jack rather later, bouncing from bed,
Saw fade on the dawn's cheek the last flush of red:
Yet who knows
When the wind rose?

Kate went to watch the new lambs at their play
And stroke the white calf born yesterday;
Jack sought the woods where trees grow tall
As who would learn to swarm them all:
Yet who knows
Where the wind goes?

Kate has sown candy-tuft, lupins and peas,
Carnations, forget-me-not and heart's ease;
Jack has sown cherry-pie, marigold,
Love-that-lies-bleeding and snap-dragons bold:
But who knows
What the wind sows?

Kate knows a thing or two useful at home,
Darns like a fairy, and churns like a gnome;
Jack is a wise man at shaping a stick,
Once he's in the saddle the pony may kick.
But hark to the wind how it blows!
None comes, none goes,
None reaps or mows,
No friends turn foes,
No hedge bears sloes,
And no cock crows,
But the wind knows!

WORDS FOR THE WIND

With the waves for hounds,
With the clouds for hawks,
I hunt the fragile ships
And scour the dry-land's dips;
And my hale voice sounds
When a cavern talks.—
Quick, children, hold your petticoats down,
Or with heads in their folds you will sail through the town.

When I lie on the earth
For leagues flowers shake
With joy; I sit up, and trees
Pulse as my heart decrees;
And new heavens have birth
When I sleep on a lake.—
Quick, children, hold your petticoats down,
Or with heads in their folds you will sail through the town.

LUBBER BREEZE

The four sails of the mill
Like stocks stand still;
Their lantern-length is white
On blue more bright.

Unruffled is the mead
Where lambkins feed,
And sheep and cattle browse,
And donkeys drowse.

Never the least breeze will
The wet thumb chill
That the anxious miller lifts,
Till the vane shifts.

The breeze in the great flour-bin
Is snug tucked in;
The lubber, while rats thieve,
Laughs in his sleeve.

LEAF-LAND

High, high, high,
In the sky
The tree's great head
Far out-spread
Holds a world for fairies,
Joy for ever varies.

Happier none
Beneath the sun!
They in and out
Till leaves e'en shout,
Just as hills do after
Children's louder laughter.

As I stare
Right up there,
I can see
Come to me
Down the leafy staircase,
Such a peeping fair face,

That I feel
So little real,
Airs might shift,
Yea, and lift
Me where bird-wing fanning
Would be nigh unmanning.

High, high, high,
In the sky,
Mid the spread
Twigs I'ld thread,
Like the little fairies
Where no jot of care is.

THE SQUIRREL

O squirrel, would I were as you!
As nimble on a bough, as quick
To listen,—re-assured, to flick
My tail and bound across and through
The leafy coverts, twig-supported,
Mid rafters of some great tree's roof
Where sun soaks through the rain-drop proof,
And heavy body never sported.

Winged birds are there, and you, the red
Small playful scurrier up the bark,
Whose home is in some hollow dark
But soft and warm as any bed.
Have after you, you wingless flitter!
Race me into the topmost boughs!
What need have we for floors? a house
Without a plank for us were fitter!

Teach me to swarm and climb and be
A sailor such as those who vie
—On mast and rigging dizzy high—
With you in nimbleness and glee!
For though a loud wind toss these branches
A ship is handled worse by storms:
Then to his work the sailor warms;
From spar to rope he daring launches.

NURSERY ENACTMENTS

Before their nursery fire one day
Upon two hassocks sat
Willy and Nance, half tired of play;
Between them purred the cat.

" You said this afternoon ' I would
" We'd seen a fairy,' Nance;
" I've read of fairies; most were good
" And loved to play and dance.

" Yet now it is a long while since
" Fairies were often seen;
" Oh, that I then had been a prince,
" And you had been a queen!

" Then, kindlier spoken of, the fairies
" Were not too rarely seen;
" By night they churned butter in dairies
" Or swept the farm-house clean.

" A bowl of milk for Lob was set,
" His beans Hobgoblin earned:
" And one was drained, the other eat
" Before the day returned.

" Then through the woodland glades by night
" Would Queen Titania stray
" With Oberon, and the moonlight
" No fairer was than they.

" While little elves danced in their rings
" Upon the dewy grass;
" Ah, freshlier, greener, herbage springs
" Where feet so happy pass!

" A world within a world was theirs,
" A house within a house;
" One slumbering while the other stirs,
" One bold, one shy as mouse.

" A prince no other palace had,
" A queen no other bower,
" Than a farm-house with roses clad,
" And jasmine porch in flower.

" The queen sate in the doorway then,
" Adorned with joy and health;
" The prince then laboured with his men,
" More proud of skill than wealth:

" The queen shelled peas as she sate there,
" Or russet pippins pared;
" Wise travellers speak to those so fair,
" And thus their meals were shared;

" For such a prince was glad to find
" For guest at supper time,
" A man who had improved his mind
" In many a far-off clime."

The cat purred on; then Nance, at last
Unto her brother said,
While on her grave face fire-light cast
Its fervent glow of red,

" O Willy, when you spoke of how
" The fairies worked by night,
" And in the morning swept and neat
" Each farm-house would its inmates greet,
" I thought the same thing happens now;
" Our house is thus set right.

" For often when we go to bed
" The room's in such a mess,
" That I am quite rejoiced to see
" The bedrooms prim and orderly;
" They make me on my toe-tips tread
" In awe of tidiness.

" And in the morning, why, we leave
" The beds turned inside out;
" 'Tis dreadful after bolster-fights!
" But think, are there more dear delights
" Than from this room our eyes receive?
" It often makes you shout

" To see a nice new fire ablaze,
" The chairs in order set,
" The floor swept clean, the breakfast laid
" And all as by a fairy made,
" When sun shines, to enchant our gaze,
" Or comfort, when it's wet.

" ' A house within a house ' you said,
" When,—me this thought amazes!—
" Why, that is just as true to-day!
" Only, I think, a luckier way
" Had come into somebody's head
" Of singing servants' praises!

" How nice to call them fairies, Will,
" And be as pleased to see
" In any place about the house
" Them, as a fairy shy as mouse!
" It would go far my days to fill
" With queenliness and glee! "

" A game to last forever, Nance!
" You've hit upon it; come and dance!

" Queen Nance's house, the sprucely kept
" Shall nightly be by fairies swept—
" Shy elves as rarely seen
" By daylight, as are dusky mice,
" Of any save prince William's eyes
" And those of Nance the queen ! "
(While they are dancing the cat walks into the next room.)

A CHILD MUSES

Joy steals through me if I sleek
Damask petals of a rose
Softer than a fairy's cheek;
While for gladness my hand goes
Through fringes of floss-silk, and guesses
How slowly mermaids comb their tresses.

" O thou rosy finger-tip,
" Touch me ! " pleads the looking-glass :
" Then muse how palms of feet must trip
" O'er polished sapphire floors, where pass
" The seraphs holding hands and singing
" Songs that through their hearts are ringing."

How these hands of mine would love,
When, both scooped up, they form a nest,
If down some comfortable dove
Fluttered and, cooing, there should rest,
While quivered through my arms such blisses
As sleeper feels whom vision kisses !

SHOES AND STOCKINGS OFF

Bare feet, bare feet,
Lovers of the dew;
Pleased by the wet moss greatly,
Pleased by the shell-strewn shore,
Pleased by the lawn grass too,
Yet
More by a golden floor.

Bare feet, bare feet,
Every day bless you!
Walk near the fountains stately,
Walk in the pebbled stream,
Walk 'neath the calm waves blue
And
Dream there a mermaid's dream.

Oh, fare sweet, my bare feet
Like lovers two and two!
Lead me for ever where there
Of shoes is known no need;
For I have ne'er met care there
Where I with you might speed;
Lead me because I love you,
Love you, my sweet bare feet,—
Then still I'll sing above you
And you shall still fare sweet.

LULLABY I.

Laugh, laugh,
Laugh gently though,—
For leaves do so,
When the great boughs, to and fro,
Cradle the birds on the tops of the trees,—
Gently they laugh for the love of these.

Sleep, sleep,
Sleep lightly though,—
For birds do so,
Rocked by great boughs to and fro;
With wind in their feathers, their dreams have wings
And they visit the gardens of numberless kings.

LULLABY II.

Stripped thee when thou hast and girt
Thy clean night-shirt,
Leap into thy soft snug bed;
Lay down thy head;
Sleep, and in thy white cot be
A picture for the stars to see.

Cling not to the game that's dead;
Be glad instead,
After all thy falls and frowns,
That silence drowns
All that any star might see
To make such clear light sad for thee.

Sleep, sleep;
Down, down,
Through silence good and deep,
Down, down;
Sink as through a well, each trace
Or of spite, of sulk or frown,
Dying out from thy still face
Till asleep thou dreaming lie,—
A sight to charm the moon on high
And hold her longer in the sky.

HOME RULE

Oh, to be glad as a bird!
Never to be put out!
Not to be ruffled by look or word,
But both to meet like the bluest day
That charms the world in May!

Oh, to live on and on!
Travel the world about,
As cloud sails or as sails a swan,
When skies are blue and waters bright
Bearing serene delight!

Bearing a smile like the sun,
Break on to-day and to-morrow,
Soothing the eyes of sorrow,
And giving a cause for none!
This is to be a queen or a king,
Not of countries but hearts;
This is to conquer everything
At home, not foreign parts.

THE YOUNG CORN IN CHORUS

All we, the young corn, stalwart stand
In millions upright side by side,
And countless acres of the land
In orderly close chorus hide,
Shouting : " Gold, of his largess,
And health he discharges
Both far and wide ! "

Though all the world were brimmed with gold
And valleys with health had over-run,
Who could command his hand to hold,
Contest the giving of the sun?
Hail him; vigour for growing
He cometh bestowing
On each weak one !

The winds, with showers on their backs,
His servants, lounge by distant seas;
And far-seen summits of their packs
Heave up when shifted for their ease,—
Wearied long there attending
Lest heat of his sending
Cloy those he would please.

HANDS

Sing, for with hands,
One thumb and four fingers apiece,
They built the temples of Egypt and Greece!
Sing, for in many lands
Are things of use and beauty seen
That without hands had never been—
Without skilled hands!

White hands, deft hands,
No lily is more lovely; no,
Nor can the swan more graces show
Than lady's arm commands.
O strength as of a giant's grip,
O firmness meet to steer a ship,
O swart male hands!

Frank hands, free hands,
When shall my little ones grow great
And clasp such huge ones for their mate?
Who thinks, who understands
How hands of soldiers and of kings
And all those by princesses waved
Were once a baby's hands, and craved
For jangling toys and shining things?

WINGS

That man, who wishes not for wings,
Must be the slave of care;
For birds that have them move so well
And softly through the air:
They venture far into the sky,
If not so far as thoughts or angels fly.

Feather from under feather springs,
All open like a fan;
Our eyes upon their beauty dwell,
And marvel at the plan
By which things made for use so rare
Are powerful and delicate and fair.

When callow brood doth rest
Against a feathered mother's breast,
Beneath the shadow of her wings,
None seem so close at home as they,
Nor is love felt a cosier way;
Their mother is their home! Lark sings,
And lark may sing; but not so take
The heart by storm as hen can take
When, hawk in the sky,
She is brave for her fledgelings' sake!
Swallow soars, and swallow may soar on high
To the top of the sky;
The eagle is strong, the ostrich fleet;
Let them glory in prowess. Ere
They learned to conquer air and space
With ease, velocity and grace,
Lark, swallow, eagle, ostrich were
Dependent on devoted care;
Each once was snugly stowed away,
Yea, like a smooth stone there each lay
Egg speckled, bluish, white or grey!

DAYS AND NIGHTS

Like a king from a sunrise-land
In fair ship sailing,
With banners salt winds expand
And pennons trailing;
With wealth untold and a mind unknown,
And a power to love and make friends of his own,
And a power to leave those he likes not alone,
Each new day comes to me,—
Like king from far east sailing
Over the sea.

In a barge with golden trappings
For queen prepared,
And, against the cold, rich wrappings
And furs deep-haired,
To lands afar, by a force unguessed,
Where the face reveals what hides in the breast,
And by doubt of another no heart is distressed,
Some nights have carried me,
Like queen that homeward fared
Over the sea.

O heart, be true and strong,
That worth make thee each day's good friend;
Then thou the hours of dark shalt spend
Out there, where is no wrong.

WATER

" Tell me what hath water done? "
" From highest mountains it hath run
" And found a way to distant seas,
" And all the time flowed on with ease,
" Welcome as those who love to please."

" Say, what else hath water done? "
" It hath soared up toward the sun
" And piled cloud-ranges in the air,
" Shaped city, ship or white steed there—
" Forms that with happiest dreams compare."

" What hath water done beside? "
" Cleansed the hands we fain would hide,
" Made soiled faces fit to kiss;
" And water's crowning work it is
" When tear-washed hearts recapture bliss."

MY FRIEND

I have a friend, and he is gay
As ever in the month of May
Could be a true blue holiday.
He takes a pleasure,
No matter what the game may be,
As great as those who sail a sea
And are the first to sail there; he
Makes much of leisure.

In school he pores above his book
As, lonely in a wood-land nook,
Queen fairy on herself might look
In pool reflected.
And, never taken by surprise,
He answers questions with his eyes
Before his ready tongue replies
Clear and collected.

In battles long ago have fought
Brave men, and I have often thought,
He with the best his best had wrought;
For none does better:
Once all an afternoon he plied
The sculls and rowed against the tide,
Though she to sea had drifted wide,
If he had let her.

We others gave up, wearied out:
But, though his arms ached, he was stout,
And none who stayed a battle's rout
Could have kept cooler.
So, not to waste his friendship, I
To be like him resolve to try,
And when like me the world thinks, why,
We'll make him ruler.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

With half his arm in running water
David groped for rounded pebbles;
Kneeling by the brook he sought there
Till he found five that were good:
Oh! that I had been by then,
When at last he upright stood,
Choicest of the sons of men!
While round his feet in rippling trebles
Water crooned across the pebbles.

He was young and fair to see
In his shepherd's dress;
His spirit and his limbs felt free,
Quit then of their late distress
When he, caged in king Saul's casque and gaunt
war suit,
Had said, " I cannot go in these,
Since their use I have not tested "—would not do it
Even a king to please.

He left that clear and purling water;
Only one of his five stones
Did he use, yet mighty slaughter
On the Philistines ensued:
Oh that I had heard the shout,
When that stone had been proved good—
Done its work beyond a doubt!
While ended felled Goliath's groans,
And no need for further stones.

It is always good to be
Where long-sighed-for things
Are done with that felicity

Every hero with him brings,—
When he must be up and doing, steps forth lightly,
Nor needs fear's casque and mail to don,
Sure, he who acteth simply, bravely, rightly,
Hath trustier armour on.

DAVID AND JONATHAN

It was not easier to be brave
When Jonathan to David gave
A prince's for a shepherd's kiss,
And golden bracelets, chains and rings,
And garments such as sons of kings
Wore then to walk where honour is.

It was not easier to be true
And wear as he, a prince, must do,—
Meeting blank wonder or a jeer—
A shepherd's smock, and count it bliss
Merely because that smock was his—
David's, his friend's, whose love cost dear.

It was not easier to be brave
And sleep in lonely den or cave
Where lions prowl, where scorpions crawl,
When, hunted by his friend's mad father,
David risked his own life rather
Than take the life of sleeping Saul.

It was not easier to be true,
When he once more found Saul, and knew
That he might kill him and go free—
To save the man who sought to slay him,
To take his spear and cruise, then pray him
Be friends, calling himself a flea!

Not without effort are friends made;
Not without suffering are they kept:
Though this is like a friend indeed,
To suffer plaintless and not heed
Though pain have reached him through his friend:
But when such troubles find an end,

And joy is his, then, then to need
His friend, is like a friend indeed.

Oh, often find the time to muse
About the gentle, brave, and good!
There is no better way to choose
When nothing waits that should be done:
Yea, let the mind take flight and run
Like a 'scaped deer that seeks the wood,
To stories of the brave and good!

THE ROWERS' CHANT

Row till the land dip 'neath
The sea from view.
Row till a land peep up,
A home for you.

Row till the mast sings songs
Welcome and sweet,
Row till the waves, out-stripped,
Give up, dead beat.

Row till the sea-nymphs rise
To ask you why
Rowing you tarry not
To hear them sigh.

Row till the stars grow bright
Like certain eyes.
Row till the noon be high
As hopes you prize.

Row till you harbour in
All longing's port.
Row till you find all things
For which you sought.

TO GORDON BOTTOMLEY

THE AWAITED VOICE

Look, she is twenty-one,
And straight as the mast of a yacht!
Near her a smaller round
Is transformed as the world by the sun.
Those places where she is not
Look doleful as they look fond;
They pine as a tree that grieves
For a million of radiant leaves.

Hush, she surely is wise,
And perchance may deign to speak
Or tell some wonderful tale:
Whose thrill through her voice shall rise
As blushes mount in her cheek,
And shall over our minds prevail
Like a bevy of swallows come north,
Or as flowers re-hallow the earth.

Bow, for she turns this way!
As poplars stoop in the wind
And tremble before the moon,
Dark stoled though staidly gay,—
So let us wait her mind,
So let us crave the boon
For which Diana ached
Before Endymion waked.

REASON ENOUGH

" Who knows what a man may think?
To whom do the birds confide
Whether she will have tears to drink
And an hungry heart to hide?
Come, bandage your eyes,
Give ear though he lies;
For milkmaids and queens and gipsy-princesses
Dream and kiss blindfold or starve upon guesses."

She sang these words and curtseyed: my heart said
That though all heard my face alone was red,—
Though all hands clapped her mine alone kept still,—
Yet I perchance to praise had the best will.
Now sails she, like a spirit taking leave,
Through those glass doors to where the gardens gloom
While dim stars filter through the filmy eve.
Would she walk lonely through sweet solemn places?
She should be viewed while their spell on her face is;
Break free, my soul, good manners are thy tomb!

URGENT

Learn of my glance greeting
Yours, coy eyes,—
Learn of my heart's beating,
Too quiet breast!
" Is it not time? " joy cries;
Are you not inly pressed?
Shows this hard rose-bud pink
And not your heart?
Look, its green eyelids wink,
Impelled apart.
Can all I glow to say
Not reach you?
Not teach you
What only one may?

Learn of my pain kindness
Even through tears,—
Learn of my will's blindness
Not to regard
Prudence—for old maid's ears!—
Prudence their lives hath marred.
Happiness wins reprieves
Though harsh fools doom;
Birds nest in hovel eaves
And youth finds room.
Could I not house you? say!—
Not lead you
Not feed you
As only one may?

SUMMER LIGHTNING

I would rather ruffle leaves,
Pillaging a vine,
Than 'neath my tresses shelter thieves,
Robber lips at mine.

I would rather feel the rain,
When standing under cover,
Course my out-stretched hands amain,
Than tears shed by a lover.

O Bird in the night awake,
Thou almost mak'st me weep!
Why should thy voice so shake?
Is it thy pinions ache?
What hindereth thee to sleep?
I want not to love and I will not . . . Oh!
Love's not worth so much! and thou dost know,
I know, and all the world too knows,
No girl need love unless she chose!

A DUET

" Flowers nodding gaily, scent in air,
" Flowers posied, flowers for the hair,
" Sleepy flowers, flowers bold to stare—"
" Oh, pick me some ! "

" Shells with lip, or tooth, or bleeding gum,
" Tell-tale shells, and shells that whisper ' Come,'
" Shells that stammer, blush, and yet are dumb—"
" Oh, let me hear ! "

" Eyes so black they draw one trembling near,
" Brown eyes, caverns flooded with a tear,
" Cloudless eyes, blue eyes so windy clear—"
" Oh, look at me ! "

" Kisses sadly blown across the sea,
" Darkling kisses, kisses fair and free,
" Bob-a-cherry kisses 'neath a tree—"
" Oh, give me one ! "

Thus sang a king and queen in Babylon.

DOUBTFUL DAWN

Wake, Love; I am early woken!
Ah, Love, I am ignorant whether,
So many hearts as thou hast broken,
In aught thou canst be clever!
Will he for ever
Love me, this man thou has set in my heart?
Will he be true? shall I bear a true part?

Wake, Love; I am ready: waken!
Love, follow thou me till time's ending!
So many hearts as thou hast forsaken,
Thou needs must want befriending—
Have foes a-bending
Brows on thee:—come, come into my heart;
Take shelter; turn good and oh! never depart!

A SONG WITHOUT RHYMES

I must free my lips
Kiss complete on kiss to number :
Pauses give that pulse to music
Death and silence lack.

Thou hast need of day
Night from bounteous night to sever :
Suns are flushed with anger setting,—
Thou art vexed at dawn.

We perforce must die
Ere Time re-achieve our marriage :
Needs must be that flowers wither
Or there were no spring.

RENOVATION

Would that I might be naked Adam,
And you like Eve run bare,
Though all our friends and other folk
Unborn, un-thought-of, were!

Should we miss house or street or town,
Gossip or tea or cake,
Might we but climb a breeze-rocked pine,
Doze there or lie awake?

Ah, nothing grieves that is itself:
Say, are these millions men
Who, boxed in slate-roofed rows, there sicken
For sea, forest or glen?

"MUCH VIRTUE IN IF"

If I were king of this broad land,
And you were England's queen,
All high-roads should be glades of lawn,
All byways mossed and green;

The seashore should be lengthened out
With beach, and rock, and sand,
Till the most rural hamlet lay
Scarce seven mile inland.

Yea, long sea arms should wind and thread
Our midlands through and through,
That foresters and shepherd lads
Might watch the salt and blue.

Then caravans and pedlars,
Replacing shop and street,
Should bring folk dainty things to wear
And luscious things to eat.

A few of the great changes these,
On which we might decide,
If I were in Westminster throned
With you crowned at my side.

NOWHERE AND ONWARD

There is no reason we should write,
Or read, or speak, or sing, to-night;
Profusely starred the sky awaits us,
Our souls may thitherward take their flight.

No one alone, nor three, nor four,
Nor any counted number more,
Can make of thought such rapt keen joyance
As thrills two voyaging towards no shore.

Twin spirits cleave the vast of air
Best if their bodies do not stir:
Come, breast the stillness, and on and ever
Dip at a moment and rise a pair!

Birds, cleaving either night or day,
Flit one before, one after; they
Straggle, form clots or clouds, but never
Keep pace when flying; be that our way.

Though toil and zeal be often crossed,
No tick of time enjoyed is lost;
One hour replete with satisfaction
Old kings would prize at a great war's cost.

JOY

Like hoar-frost on a tree at dawn
Sparkles all wise delight;
And, as each branch to taper twigs
Soaring refines, joy's might
Whitens, as slenderer forms it clings to,
And towers as more fresh the growth it giveth wings to.

Frail like the topmost twigs above
The tallest forest tree,
An infant's archness is by love
Held aloft, and we
Find nothing life can shew entrances
Our hearts as doth the flash of those bright glances.

A FATHER BROODS

The child whose eyes take light,
When thou dost near,
As oft would smile and bright
Wert thou not here,
But over sea, or dead;
By others in thy stead
His joy were fed.

A FATHER HAVING LOST A SON SIX YEARS OLD

My thoughts aver, thou canst not stir
That darling head,
Nor, half-awake, peep from unfinished dreams
Into this April day
Which, bright and vacant, seems
A long room for thy play;
Since thou art dead.

A week ago, thou wast aglow
With lambent youth;
I heard thy fresh mind sally into speech—
Attempt a tale and find
No words: we both laughed, each
To what was nearing blind.
I own the truth,—

Thousands of times Death hath young children caught,
And shall again slay others;
I do not fly the thought
Of those poor fathers, mothers;
I vaunt not that elsewhere shorn threads re-knit:
My thoughts contend, "Here is an end,"
And I submit.

THE FORERUNNER

Virgin, afar, those snowfields tower!—
And who so bold to limit hope
Before he there hath lain an hour,
And thence surveyed each weary slope?

Man's spirit hath alone been there—
There waits for us with welcoming eyes.
Heartened by our resolve to front
Life's drizzling cant and sleet of lies,

He ran before us; yea, he is
The flower of our daring; we
Gave him that quick sure foot and itch
To tackle sheer immensity.

We stumble and are left behind;
We toil, our strength breaks, and we die;
Yet those, whose loss meant gain for him,
Have let all go without a sigh.

A POET IN THE SPRING REGRETS HAVING WED SO LATE IN LIFE

Some things, that we shall never know,
Are eloquent to-day,
Belittling our experience, though
We loved and were gay :

For those, whose younger hands are free
With a body not their own,
Taste delicacies of intimacy
Which *we* have not known.

Primrose, narcissus, daffodil
In sudden April plenty,
Flourish as tender fancies thrill
Spouses at twenty !

SHELLS

Nature nothing shows more rare
Than shells, not even flowers; no,
Unfading petals tinted glow
Where ocean's obscure weight is air;
Where winds are currents, streams or tides,
Life to perfect their beauty hides.

Each hingéd valve curves out and rims
Pink, yellow, purple, green or blue,
A colour-whisper's graded hue;
While dinted lobe, spine or rib limns
Crisp helmet, cuspéd shard to wing,—
Full panoply for fairy king.

In easy air and warm light nursed
Bloom prompt wit, love with glamour fraught,
And brave but flower-like youth:
Like brittle shells, long years immersed,
Secreted by toil, conscience and thought,
Are formed art, virtue, truth.

TO RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I cannot mock thy "Yes" with "No";
For what is hidden may be of such worth
As beggars all we know:
Yet how mine wonders at thy mind!—
To see schooled man so easy on this earth
And yet not blind!
Is it true thy candour weighs
Long June Days,
Deep clear nights,
Full tenderness on self-forgetful face,
All-probing knowledge, art perfection-nigh,
And aught else that delights
Poor man's goodwill,
As being really like a trace
Left on fingers that have touched,—
Perhaps half-tried to kill,—
Some lustrous butterfly?
Is Psyche so much grander than our sages vouched?
That all our noblest win of her is like
A few scales brushed from a cerulean wing?
Ah, is all evil impotent to strike
Her blow more damaging
Than clumsy child adorer gives the fly
That he admires too much
To really clutch,
Although he fain must try?
And, if he woo,
Will she even dare much too,
Hover down to his lips and, like his rapture returned,
Enter and home in the brain and the heart that for her yearned?

TO GIACOMO LEOPARDI

Cold was thy thought, O stricken son
Of Italy, cold as the moon
That naked, barren, frozen, on
This fertile earth, the boon
Of silver light
Sheds by night, —
Touching the million shaken leaves
That crown our woods; while every fold
Of buttressed Alp soft charm receives,
Till near things look like lands far sought.
Yes, thy thought ached, it was so cold;
And winsome movement, and choice sound,
In harmonies divinely wrought,
Could they be born of that profound
Despair which they so clearly taught?
Nay, suffering, like a nightmare still,
Turned all thy youth's warm radiance chill,
—As yon dead moon turns the sun's beams
Aside in cold yet lucid streams,
Whose loveliness from farther came
Than that dead planet's cratered side;
A globe of glory all one flame
Is in their brightness still implied.
So in the beauty of thine odes
Man's glowing eager spirit shines,
While yet its strange deflection loads
With added charm their play, refines
Their luminous force, till they,
Fair as moonlight,
Infuse the night
Of our roused sorrow, sadness, and
Remembered pain, where they expand
Brilliance, both solemn and serene,
Grand as the presence of Night's queen.

YET THERE IS ROOM

I.

What boundless contrast in these clear night-skies!
Yea, earth, with all the worthies who now thrive,
Or ever at one moment were alive,
Lose in those shoals all virtue and all size!
" Why prate of bad and good then? " some wit cries.
Yet doth wasp's paper home yield like a hive?
Are maidens ne'er proved true by those who wive?
Shall science not outweigh opinion's lies?
Since man's whole metric prowess is surpassed
By height, depth, width and weight, so, too,
May loyal effort, passion, and grace contrast
With all that makes men good, and, lost to view
Through very grandeur, purposeful pursue
With art divine, aims lovely as they are vast.

II.

For major worths pass through our midst unseen
Of most who stare with hope to fill a head
Or warm a heart; being reserved, they shed
Too fine a radiance—have no chance to wean
Crowds from more obvious skill and brilliance.
Keen
And thorough students, and they hardly, thread
Confusing claims, while inch by inch is spread
Report of how ill-prized our best have been.
What though alone our dim small planet sound
Discordant 'mid the ether's choral throng?
What though among us men might now be found,
Unnoted and unhailed, who hear the song
That Plato listened for, that Buddha heard,
That Jesus had by heart, both tune and word?

III.

Peasants, by no alluring pool seduced,
Peer from the mule-track down through July wood,
Convinced the best swimmer by those clear gulfs could
Be sucked to doom. But, at such fears amused,
Footing their honeymoon, two tourists halt,
Strip, plunge, and find beneath the loud cascade,
Flecked by the Spanish-chestnut's hov'ring shade,
For youth and health a bath without a fault.
Thus the world's road winds near an Alpine stream,
And many catch, like torrent's beryl gleam,
Flashes from strength with which ideals are fraught;
Yet rare the soul which yearns, is bold and dives:
Still fewer those whose fair confederate lives,
In naked bliss, cleave the pure wells of thought.

THE DEED

I.

O thou who art the lesson that I learn,
Ah! how thou jadest my poor brain and heart!
Too subtle, too intense for me thou art,
Too pure, too simple; why canst thou not spurn
Mine effort—quench the flax that will not burn
But ever smokes? What hast thou to impart
To restive dulness that would backward start
And leave thee? Why must thou to follow turn?
Wilt dog me every time I break away?
More piteous still behind me hurrying seem
Thy feet, the more I feel thou squand'rest care.
Canst be the reason why I am, thou dream
Of what I might be? Strike me down, nor spare,
Nor pity rebel weary of his day!

II.

No sight earth yields our eyes is lovelier than
The body of a naked strong young man.
O watch him course the meadows flecked with shade
Beside a stream, before his plunge be made!
Then watch him ridge the water to its brims
With rhythmic measure while he gravely swims;
And watch him issue, shining even more,
Run, leap and prove himself upon the shore,
Intent to warm his limbs and have them dry,
Making great efforts, seeming as he would fly.
Ah! he can fill an hour up in this way
And never hear a voice within him say
" Why art thou not at work? " for it is true
That all he is approves what he doth do.

III.

But might the beauty of the soul be viewed
As easily coursing over happenings rude,—
Parting the fulness of its quick desires
With strokes as steady toward where man aspires
To be, in order there to prove new strength;—
Might souls be watched thus, then indeed at length
Life winged with beauty and unhindered grace
Would quicken rapture on the upturned face.
Might souls be viewed as swallows are, then all
Would train as athletes, let loose follies fall,
Strip each his cared-for self from clinging shames
Like useless garments, and at heavenly games
Exert his talents and good-will express,
Not as lame duty tries, but with success.

IV.

Mine is that body with which man might soar,
Though I refuse to yield it to his need!
On his fine motions every gaze would feed
If by my free gift visible form he wore.
Those only, who his durance aye deplore,
In fleeting visions worship him, when, freed,
He, gay for beauty, leaps, a bird indeed,
From dreamland where outcast he pined before.
Yea, those there are who for his exile feel;
Even such as are a comfort when this life
Loses what youth bestows, and quails at strife.
They pity, though they cannot make him real
For others, by resigning all to him,—
Wealth, time, desire, his; his, brain, heart and limb!

V.

Sweet bird of heaven, he rests as swallows do,
Who furl and hold their long wings level while
They sit upon some ledge : so in mid-blue
Lights he upon some sailing white cloud-isle.
Deep orange plumage sheathes his naked back
As he sits on his heels and clasps his knees
Each in a hand, the forearm lying slack
Along the thigh. There breathes he at his ease,
Filling anew and refilling his chest,
With stretched neck, leaning forward through the gale,
His flushed face gleaning from its passage zest
For dive sublime or yet more rapturous sail.
Beauties as rare were seen, if those who try
To express concern for man for him would die.

VI.

Am I become one substance with the past?
Results wrought in me, having bound my will,
Stand at the portal armed, prepared to kill
Each sweet thought it is vain to invite at last.
With dear averted faces, they as fast
As may be sweep by one who loves them still,
Anxious, if seen, not seeing, to fulfil
With just neglect the sentence on him passed.
The *man I was* doomed him I am to sorrow.
Yet *one who might be* whispers to my heart
" To-day is great with Yesterday's child To-morrow,
" Who, young, is good; who, good, needs all thou art.
" It costs a life to do each lovely thing :
" End thine own days and give place to a king ! "

VII.*

He who acts is the only splendid man.
Who works for him or holds a torch is brave :
Nay, one who merely listens at the door
But wills the deed, abashed receiveth praise.
Naught save true valour, needed through long years,
Can shake the world or free a soul from pain.
Glorious the thing done ! glorious the doer ! glorious
The day and hour which were used so well !
All eyes eternally shall light at them,
Speech burn with power when they are its theme,
And minds conceive that else had borne no thought.
Life, time and matter from the integral act
Draw their sole worth : it lives, endures, hath weight.
The rest, inert, is fugitive, unstable.

* In part suggested by a passage in the *Electra* of Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

THE LOVE-CHILD

The young, proud, careless, coarse, are gulls;
They shrink from woe and grief despise:
They are as squirrels, peacocks, bulls;
Insight needs other than their eyes.

But those who suffer are released
From a close prison of dark sense:
Their pains are as a mother's eased,
Their child is more than recompense.

Take thou the babe Remorse to heart:
Cherish it as thy first-born son
In whom the brute can have no part,
In whom a new race is begun!

SILENCE SINGS

So faint, no ear is sure it hears,
So faint and far;
So vast that very near appears
My voice, both here and in each star
Unmeasured leagues do bridge between;
Like that which on a face is seen
Where secrets are;

Sweeping, like veils of lofty balm,
Tresses unbound
O'er desert sand, o'er ocean calm,
I am wherever is not sound;
And, goddess of the truthful face,
My beauty doth instil its grace
That joy abound.

TO SILENCE

O deep and clear as is the sky,
A soul is as a bird in thee
That travels on and on; so I,
Like a snared linnet, now break free,
Who sought thee once with leisured grace
As hale youth seeks the sea's warm bays.

And as a floating nereid sleeps
In the deep-billowed ocean-stream;
And by some goatherd on lone rock
Is thought a corpse, though she may dream
And profit by both health and ease
Nursed on those high green rolling seas,—

Long once I drifted in thy tide,
Appearing dead to those I passed;
Yet lived in thee, and dreamed, and waked
Twice what I had been. Now, I cast
Me broken on thy buoyant deep
And dreamless in thy calm would sleep.

Silence, I almost now believe
Thou art the speech on lips divine,
Their greatest kindness to their child.
Yet I, who for all wisdom pine,
Seek thee but as a bather swims
To refresh and not dissolve his limbs;—

Though those be thine, who asked and had.
And asked and had again, again,
Yet always found they wanted more,
Till craving grew to be a pain;
And they at last to Silence fled,
Glad to lose all for which they pled.

O pure and wide as is the sky,
Heal me, yet give me back to life!
Though thou foresee the day when I,
Sated with failure, dead to strife,
Shall seek in thee my being's end,
Still be to my fond hope a friend.

SEMELE

Semele lay in bliss all night,
Loved and loving without light,
Blind, but tingling like a string
Struck by dying poet when
Glorified he ceases sing
Listened to by gods and men.

Semele dared a wish,—to see;
That her eyes might equals be
With her heart and lips and ears:
Night on perfect night she pled.
Sudden lightning drank her tears,
Life and sweetness: she lay dead.

Semele dying thus yet bare
Fiery rapid Bacchus fair
Who, nursed by goddesses and in
High heaven reared, hath since progressed
Throughout all Asia with the din
Of cymbal, drum and voice possessed.

THE THIGH OF ZEUS

The soul of Semele
Through her Bacchus tapped thy greatness, Zeus;
And, lodged between thy thews,
Took part in thee.
Throbbing, a god's pain wrestled with our blood,
And flesh divine was big with woman's son!
His second womb!—a more congenial place
For all he should be! Let the ichor run
From nets that cradle, ichor pulse and race
Through that new maze of veins
Which feeds his limbs and brains!
Each flower's form is thus won from Apollo;
Not from his offer,—in his pride's despite,—
Subtracted from the source of light
By weakness patient-wise to follow
Affection's lead, which yet the event proves right.

Woman conceived thy last and peerless son,
Who, youngest, pushed adventure farthest,—
Bade the vintage cap the harvest,
And nearest to pure rapture won,—
Was best-beloved, most sudden, most inventive!
His mother from our darkness drew incentive
For urgent prayer unto that power which took
And gave from out the night,—
Which heard and shook
Its energy into a blaze of light,
And with compliance cleansed her being
Of all that so had hindered seeing.
Only what in her child might live already
Remained of one who saw the soul which loved her:
Nor was her wish thereby reproved as heady;
Like hand, withdrawn from all that gloved her,
That clasps and holds loved hand quite still,
Her will held in thy will.

THE YOUNG MAN'S FONDEST FOE

Mothers enslave their sons, from honour hide,
Pamp'ring the body while the spirit pines,
Are prompt if throat, deaf if soul, have sighed.
From all that great is their blind fear confines.
Yet they spur worthless hopes on mean careers:
What gilds trash, saps resolve, like mother's tears?

How few have dared like Semele to pray
Their son might ford beyond them and grow strange?
Granting him to a grandeur that must slay
In him what sorted with their own life's range?
Can mortal fathers this? then how should these,
Who cowering won, prospect what the eagle sees?

Can lovers fond prefer for those unborn
Ideal parents?—recapture hope set free
In passion's trance, through which unearthly scorn
Hounds all they erstwhile were, all they must be
When those swift hours have mewed their towering wings,
And feelings are again time-tethered things?

A PRAYER

I.

Hide me for ever, hide me now,
For all my will is frustrate. Take,
O take my thought, as thou
From Semele didst Bacchus take;
But first, O flood me with thy might,
Let me consume in thy delight!

So may I die, yet dying know
Zeus was a partner to create
This beauty ripe in me. Ah, show
Mine eyes thy power, and elate
My throbbing heart with confidence,
Thou father of all joy intense!

Thou father of this intense pain,
Thou fill'dst me with this avid thought
That cannot breathe in me. How fain
Was I to live! and long have sought—
My hopes by holiness forbidden—
To be from thy light safely hidden.

II.

Ah, happy Semele! she was
By satisfaction blinded:
Likewise in one bright sheet of awe,
Let me, let me, be winded:
Free me from all that is not thine,
All fault that only can be mine;
(Though flesh dread love so male and mighty,
Whose single aim reproves all flighty
Impuissant sparkles of desire)
As firefly by a forest fire
Lap thou my separate will to shine,—
Be light and glory wholly thine!

III.

To Semele's bed by midnight came,
In the fair flower-months of her youth,
A love she could not see or name.
Thine ardent soul, which is but as it gives—
For bliss is all its function, name and truth—
Near her heart lived, near my thought lives.
Ah! she grew pregnant with a son divine,
Whose life from hers absorbed the best, till she,
Exhausted from within, night-long did pine
For thee to take him from her and set free
That residue of weakness, all that seemed
Oppressive to the wealth with which she teemed:
So take my thought, so take my life from me!

COME NEARER YET

Come nearer yet!
A child, I thought truth would commune
With me, if not at once, yet soon.

The day I wed
I cried the more wildly for regret,
" Come nearer, nearer still! " and fed
Impatient hope with that embrace
Which, as who washing dips his face,
Plunges the one soul in the supreme
Effort of another's aspiration,
And leaves both streaming with elation.

Having toiled for skill and worth, I cry—
" Let me know something ere I die!
" Not merely the measured husk and its imprint,—
" Not words left life-lorn if they more than hint,—
" Not woman known but as our limbs are known,—
" But that within me which is not mine own.
" Naught save the never seen or heard or felt,
" Which yet precedes my thought and will, precedes
" Every appearance wherewith I have dealt,
" Is or could crown the essence of my needs.
" Not life, not love, (though love, though life, are mere
" Operations of adroit and complex gear,
" Unless we do suppose transfused through them
" This which claims fealty as of right more clear
" Than thought's or wife's or child's): though this condemn
" My every action, yet when the day's done
" This kinder seems than I to my small son."

A MIDNIGHT ECSTASY

" From everywhere seen—
" I cannot see.
" My ray of light
" Straight through the night
" Has everywhere been
" Save back to me.
" One power is mine,
" One only, to shine.
" It is all that I am or do
" Or think of or love."—

It is fine, O star,
Alone, afar,
Absorbed, contented, true,
To dwell above
The divided wills,
The hope that kills,
And long, long ache that in man
Gnaws and is fed
In conscious strife
On self-planned life
That never has done all it can;
Whose gleam flickers, blurs red,—
Never streams in straight line
Like that white shaft of thine.
Yet forth from self forgot—
From creature fused in act white-hot—
What power comes to re-create—
What joy goes forth to celebrate
The life that has been!

Such act, such death,
(The wise world saith)
From everywhere seen
Is blind like thee.

O act of light
Rapt pure and bright
Is not thy being keen?
Hast thou no glee?

Want makes men what they are.
Can doer of a perfect deed
Have any need?
Success, like incapacity,
Require a fee?
Nay, it, like star
Is what it gives,—
Is that which lives
In our felicity;—
The buoyancy of admiration,
Tingling health of all elation!
For, as dun cloth is bleached to white,
Exposed to worth men's hearts refine;
The lit give light—
The shone-on shine,
Grow clean, grow fair,
Transmute, absorbed in seeing,
To full responsive being:—
Till joy be everywhere,
Yet nowhere any bounded glee
Nor soul not to all others free.

THE DYING SWAN

O silver-throated Swan
Struck, struck! a golden dart
Clean through thy breast has gone
Home to thy heart.
Thrill, thrill, O silver throat!
O silver trumpet, pour
Love for defiance back
On him who smote!
And brim, brim o'er
With love; and ruby-dye thy track
Down thy last living reach
Of river, sail the golden light—
Enter the sun's heart—even teach,
O wondrous-gifted Pain, teach thou
The God of love, let him learn how!

TO CHARLES SHANNON

SENT FROM EGYPT WITH A FAIR ROBE OF TISSUE TO A SICILIAN VINE-DRESSER. 276 B.C.

Put out to sea, if wine thou wouldest make
Such as is made in Cos : when open boat
May safely launch, advice of pilots take;
And find the deepest bottom, most remote
From all encroachment of the crumbling shore,
Where no fresh stream tempers the rich salt wave,
Forcing rash sweetness on sage ocean's brine;
As youthful shepherds pour
Their first love forth to Battos gnarled and grave,
Fooling shrewd age to bless some fond design.

Not after storm ! but when, for a long spell,
No white-maned horse has raced across the blue,
Put from the beach ! lest troubled be the well—
Less pure thy draught than from such depth were due.
Fast close thy largest jars, prepared and clean !
Next weight each buoyant womb down through the flood,
Far down ! when, with a cord the lid remove,
And it will fill unseen,
Swift as a heart Love smites sucks back the blood :—
This bubbles, deeper born than sighs, shall prove.

If thy bowed shoulders ache, as thou dost haul—
Those groan who climb with rich ore from the mine;
Labour untold round Ilion girt a wall;
A god toiled that Achilles' arms might shine;
Think of these things and double knit thy will !
Then, should the sun be hot on thy return,
Cover thy jars with piles of bladder weed,
Dripping, and fragrant still
From sea-wolds where it grows like bracken-fern :
A grapnel dragged will soon supply thy need.

Home to a tun convey thy precious freight!
Wherein, for thirty days, it should abide,
Closed, yet not quite closed from the air, and wait
While, through dim stillness, slowly doth subside
Thick sediment. The humour of a day,
Which has defeated youth and health and joy,
Down, through a dreamless sleep, will settle thus,
Till riseth maiden gay
Set free from all glooms past—or else a boy
Once more a school-friend worthy Troilus.

Yet to such cool wood tank some dream might dip:
Vision of Aphrodite sunk to sleep,
Or of some sailor let down from a ship,
Young, dead, and lovely, while across the deep,
Through the calm night, his hoarse-voiced comrades
chaunt—
So far at sea, they cannot reach the land
To lay him perfect in the warm brown earth.
Pray that such dreams there haunt!
While, through damp darkness, where thy tun doth
stand,
Cold salamanders sidle round its girth.

Gently draw off the clear and tomb it yet
For other twenty days, in cedarn casks!
Where through trance, surely, prophecy will set;
As, dedicated to light temple-tasks,
The young priest dreams the unknown mystery.
Through Ariadne, knelt disconsolate
In the sea's marge, so welled back warmth which
throbbed
With nuptial promise: she
Turned; and, half-choked through dewy glens, some
great,
Some magic drone of revel coming sobbed.

Of glorious fruit, indeed, must be thy choice,
Such as has fully ripened on the branch,
Such as due rain, then sunshine, made rejoice,
Which, pulped and coloured, now deep bloom doth blanch;
Clusters like odes for victors in the games,
Strophe on strophe globed, pure nectar all!
Spread such to dry,—if Helios grant thee grace,
Exposed unto his flames
Two days, or, if not, three; or, should rain fall;
Stretch them on hurdles in the house four days.

Grapes are not sharded chestnuts, which the tree
Lets fall to burst them on the ground, where red
Rolls forth the fruit, from white-lined wards set free,
And all undamaged glows 'mid husks it shed;
Nay, they are soft and should be singly stripped
From off the bunch, by maiden's dainty hand,
Then dropped through the cool silent depth to sink
(Coy, as herself hath slipped,
Bathing, from shelves in caves along the strand)
Till round each dark grape water barely wink;

Since some nine measures of sea-water fill
A butt of fifty, ere the plump fruit peep,
—Like sombre dolphin shoals when nights are still,
Which penned in Proteus' wizard circle sleep,
And 'twixt them glinting curves of silver glance
If Zephyr, dimpling dark calm, counts them o'er.—
Let soak thy fruit for two days thus, then tread!
While bare-legged bumpkins dance,
Bright from thy bursting press arched spouts shall pour,
And gurgling torrents towards thy vats run red.

Meanwhile the maidens, each with wooden rake,
Drag back the skins and laugh at aprons splashed;
Or youths rest, boasting how their brown arms ache,
So fast their shovels for so long have flashed,
Baffling their comrades' legs with mounting heaps.
Treble their labour! still the happier they,
Who at this genial task wear out long hours,
Till vast night round them creeps,
When soon the torch-light dance whirls them away;
For gods who love wine double all their powers.

Iacchus is the always grateful god!
His vineyards are more fair than gardens far;
Hanging, like those of Babylon, they nod
O'er each Ionian cliff and hill-side scar!
While Cypris lends him saltness, depth, and peace;
The brown earth yields him sap for richest green;
And he has borrowed laughter from the sky;
Wildness from winds; and bees
Bring honey.—Then choose casks which thou hast seen
Are leakless, very wholesome, and quite dry!

That Coan wine the very finest is,
I do assure thee, who have travelled much
And learned to judge of diverse vintages.
Faint not before the toil! this wine is such
As tempteth princes launch long pirate barks;—
From which may Zeus protect Sicilian bays,
And, ere long, me safe home from Egypt bring,
Letting no black-sailed sharks
Scent this king's gifts, for whom I sweeten praise
With those same songs thou didst to Chloë sing!

I wrote them 'neath the vine-cloaked elm, for thee.
Recall those nights! our couches were a load
Of scented lentisk; upward, tree by tree,
Thy father's orchard sloped, and past us flowed
A stream sluiced for his vineyards; when, above,
The apples fell, they on to us were rolled,
But kept us not awake.—O Laco, own
How thou didst rave of love!
Now art thou staid, thy son is three years old;
But I, who made thee love-songs, live alone.

Muse thou at dawn o'er thy yet slumbering wife!—
Not chary of her best was nature there,
Who, though a third of her full gift of life
Was spent, still added beauties still more rare;
What calm slow days, what holy sleep at night,
Evolved her for long twilight trystings fraught
With panic blushes and tip-toe surmise:
And then, what mystic might—
All, with a crowning boon, through travail brought!
Consider this and give thy best likewise!

Ungrateful be not! Laco, ne'er be that!
Well worth thy while to make such wine 'twould be:
I see thy red face 'neath thy broad straw hat,
I see thy house, thy vineyards, Sicily!—
Thou dost demur, good but too easy friend!
Come, put those doubts away! thou hast strong lads,
Brave wenches; on the steep beach lolls thy ship
Where vine-clad slopes descend,
Sheltering our bay, that headlong rillet glads,
Like a stripped child fain in the sea to dip.

AGATHON TO LYSIS

A beautiful bird on a beautiful dame
Begat sweet Helen of Troy:
Who, cloud-like over Idalia, came
To fondle thy mother, boy?
As in dream conceived, like a vision, thou
Recallest approaching bosomed prow,
Some leisured water-farer
On summer-long voyage. Thy wrist,—thy hand,—
Mere nothings in their movement can command
Pictures through the jubilant mind to flow
Each yielding place unto one rarer.
Now a white insinuating neck
Wooing shows ardour nought can check;
Then plumage, like a governed storm of snow,
Down settles or uprises as in thee
Zest leaps or indignation calms. I see,
Cooped whole within thine iris, too,
The vaulted vast abounding blue.
Thy voice though musical, ever fails
Ineloquent, yearning like a bird's;
Our laboured language naught avails;
For some infused Olympian strain,
First makes thee glow, then pale again
With thought too choice for words.

THE HOME OF HELEN

Lacedaemon, hast thou seen it?
Lacedaemon, Lacedaemon!
Round Taÿgetus the forests
Leaguer snow-capped crags above them.
Lacedaemon rich in corn-lands,
With the grand hill-shoulders round them
Blue as lapis in the twilight,
Striking early every morning
Through the mist till when the azure
Drops a veil of lucent sapphire
O'er our mountains in the noon-tide—
Our old ramparts, walls of safety!

And Eurotas—hast thou heard him,
Heard Eurotas, old Eurotas,
Gurgle, growl and gnaw the boulders?
Hast thou heard Eurotas laughing?
Hast thou stemmed his solemn current,
Where the dark rose-laurels shade it,
In the cool cliff-sheltered places,
Where the women bathe, while gravely
Swans sail in and out among them?
—Swimming women, in pure water
Passing 'neath swans proud and passive,
Where Zeus saw and loved white Leda?

IO

" Beautiful nymph all white with fear,
" Stay with me, share with me, dream with me here,
" A night, a month, a year ! "
" Shepherd, shepherd, I am loved; I am cursed !
" And the woes still to suffer may yet be the worst."

" Corals have I who dwell in a cave;
" White trembler, though brown as a rock, I am brave;
" Break over my breast, sad wave ! "
" Fisher, fisher, I am chased; I am blessed !
" Yet the joys I have tasted are far from the best."

" Her youth peeped through her tattered cloak !
" She was white; we are black, we Ethiop folk;
" She shuddered when we spoke ! "
" Great Zeus, great Zeus ! I am thine, I am pure !
" Thy touch but not theirs will my soul endure ! "

" White Cloud, no more driven ! O Feminine Youth,
" Rest ! oaks at Dodona have told thee the truth,
" Behold I fondle and soothe ! "
" Above me the eyes of the stars all mist;
" Grandly, grandly I am loved, I am kissed ! "

CHORUS OF GREEK GIRLS

We maidens are older than most sheep,
Though not so old as the rose-bush is;
We are only as pretty as that.
We are gay as the weather. Our minds are deep
Like wells, as any boy tells
By the blushes he dares not kiss.
The hills are fond of our chat.
We dance and shake like ringing bells,
Till our hair tumbles out of our hoods.
The boys are away in the woods,
Hunting the boar or the bear.
But joy is here as well as there;
Pretend to fly
Up into the sky,
Jumping with both feet together,—
Holding out like wings
Your sleeves and things.
Feeling as light as a feather,
We don't wonder whether
The day is long
Or the night short,
Since all our thought,
—Big as the song
Of a brown fussy bee,—
But just fills the flower which we
Each call " Me."

THE SONG OF CHEIRON

Under the mountain lawn
Are caverns, yea, there are many
On no cliff face that yawn,
Nor may be reached by any
Fissure, or crevice, or chink
Through which the stoat might slink,
Or winter-dreading snake
His way to their vastness make.

Lakes in those rock-halls sleep,
Huge cisterns, water lanes,
Pure in black darkness and deep,
The storage of old rains;
In corridor, aisle, and transept
As pure and as long have slept
Vast volumes of the night air,
For wind was never there.

Beautiful on the lawn
The hooves of the centaur sound,
Thrilling the peaceful dawn,
And echoing underground:
But maddening, grander, divine
As thought that homes in a noble soul,
Those sounds of his trampling roll
Over tarns locked in the mine.
A music, though unenjoyed,
Fraught with a latent bliss
Deeper than life's on silence buoyed,
When, mute as my worship is,
Round a dome that has all things spanned
The stars unnumbered stand.

I am the centaur, who knows
The beauty of hooves is sound;

And not like the horse that goes
Unenraptured over the ground.
The wisest of men I track,
And take them upon my back;
Pitying their steps so weak,
But entranced to hear them speak.

They say the adventurous mind,
Where thought has yet no roads,
Holds there are yet to find
Vast and divine abodes
In the central secret soul,
Where purpose and grace do roll
Like music tombed in the lawn,
When I gallop for joy at dawn;
Like silence of stars by night,
When their beauty exerts her might.

NOON VISION *

O Light, Discoverer, thou hast been seen
By poet whom an oleander's screen
Hid from the noon. He plucked that laurel's rose
To ponder on in his midday repose;
Then saw thee bright with naked virile grace,—
Yellow the curls streamed back from thy hot face,—
Racing to overtake—Ah! why?
Madness alone from thee would fly!
Who dares propose to thee a goal?
Would she toward whom thy feet have hasted,
Whelmed in thy gaze, reserve her soul?
Nothing of those whom thou hast tasted
Remains at large: Calliope,
Clyte, Bolina, Issa were
Dissolved like dew-pearls, and for thee,
Return like cirrhi to a mind
Supreme as noontide's dome of air.
Found is all sweetness thou wouldst find,
No more its own, by thee possessed;
What mortal lives that has confessed
So utterly? What nymph survives?
Thou quaffest individual lives!
Couldst never accept a delight
Partial and dipped in the night—
Through which man's blind heart must
(While self-devouring passion lives
Upon the glow its effort gives)
In futile speculation thrust.
For not as any young man is
Who after a short run may kiss,
Be satisfied, waste, flag and die.
Art thou, who from wild Daphne's cry

* In part suggested by *l'Oleandro* of Gabriele d'Annunzio.

Must yet learn even as a man,
For all thou wert divine, to fail,—
Thine ardent haste of none avail
When, fled from, on it ran.

Not that she leaves thee far behind;
Her panic scarce may ply her knees;
She stumbles like one stricken blind.
Her hands, as though they probed the night,
Agitate like some tortured tree's:
Through white swift feet,—nor swift, nor white,—
Her fear seeks havens in the mould,
Delves in directions manifold.
Her hair is tangled by the breeze,
Crispens in clots, whose fall and rise
Grow noisy like some leafy tree's.
She thinks no more from whom she flies;
Her hips writhe and are writhen ever,
Like aspen's trunk by the hard weather.

Her voice but late in sobs won out
To whet thine onward-coming shout:
That sounding throat is a mute stem
Which seems to yearn. Her eyes, her eyes,
Ah, what of them?
What of their blue revealing glance,
Where innocence with glee did dance?
Their soft lids curve like four young leaves:
And is it dew, or is it rain
That in the bush doth now retain
A hint of heavens without stain?
Speechless and sweet,
A laurel's rose, that was her mouth,
Is lifted open to the south;
Crimson and veined, alluring, gay
Those lips with which thy lips would meet!

And must a god then feel dismay,
Seeking a mouth, to find a flower?
Or . . . ! an effect of divine power,
Was this thy will?—
This blossom, this fair open thing
That holds no secret from the world?
Not like a mouth, which, though it sing
Shuts back more thoughts than it can still
By giving word and music to,
When all those prisoned crowds are hurled
Against that frontier of release,
Till silence seem more rich and true
Than eloquence or rhapsodies:
While half-shaped words ear never knew
Stir hunger in us for a kiss.

She should not, should not so have fled,
Being called with glee to thy godhead,
Thou Light, for whom the bud must burst!
Slayer of all who hoard their own,
Thou hunt'st her whom our love had nursed!
For she who feareth to be known,—
Her virgin strangeness is for thee
The stuff from which to shape a rose,
An open flower that may be
Searched utterly.
Yea, all who may not are thy foes,—
But our most darling loves are those;
For being sad, half-hearted, weak,
We pine for more than eye can see:
Yet art thou more than we dare seek.

TEMPIO DI VENERE

A marble ruin nigh forgotten
Fronts sheer on Naples' bay;
Its cornice stones are weather-rotten,
Stained by both rain and spray.

Its steps the mounting shore has buried,
All save the top-most three,
To which small waves run up like hurried
Sly kisses of the sea.

Its fluted columns crevice-jointed
Must totter every storm.
Bird-droppings have its eaves anointed,
Blunted each moulding's form.

With pavement chequer-rich sand-whitened,
Which tell-tales flaws of wind—
With walls, that once gay pictures brightened,
Blank as an old man's mind—

For fisher's painted boat 'tis stable,
Festooned with nets and cords,
Littered with dead-eyes, ends of cable,
Crab-baskets, boat-hooks, boards.

A wreckage mast, its only rafter,
Supports an old tanned sail.
Here Venus dwelt who so loved laughter;
Here now chinks flute and wail.

Here once the pirate-Pompey's seaman
Offered her shells and gold;
Here oft, flogged slave or pious leman
Complained that hearts are sold.

No more here marble limbs shall glisten,
Nor carved face smile here more,
And, bending forward half to listen,
Prompt those who mute adore.

Yet, though he call no goddess mother,
A child bathed here to-day
Who, naked, was as Cupid's brother,
So sturdy, arch, and gay!

TO SLOW MUSIC

Like shovels white of porcelain
In pyramids of spices deep,
Are shells half scooped into brown sand
Which ebbing waves drew on a heap.
Like blush by smooth nail overlain
Are others; five for either hand,
Nay, plenty for both hands and feet
Of Venus when she walks the strand,
Escaped from perfumed temple's heat.

Like wail which for Adonis rang,
Drawn up and round a hollow maze,
In others dwells a wealth of sound
That she prefers to all men's praise.
Made coral by a moment's pang
And snapt off from true hearts are found
The branching red rich veins of those
Who, wounded by her son, have drowned,
Seeking a " sea-change " for their woes.

The idle nymphs in caves far down,
Secluded life-long from alarms,
Where distance lulls the billow's roar
And moony sea-light dreams of day,
Made every shell that strews the shore.
They with their handiwork do crown
Long tresses—twine their grand white arms
With chains of cowries, and array
Their necks and bosoms. . . . Naught of lily
(Since Venus never tells) know they,
Naught of the tender violet's charms,
Of daisy naught, nor daffodilly.

TO AN EARLY SPRING DAY

O day, thou found'st me sleeping; let me sleep!
Too many of thy brothers too like thee
Have waked me with such manners. Didst thou peep
With something of thy sisters' smile, may be
I even then would sleep; though they were gay
And called me oft in leafy flowery May:
Of banks more soft with moss than any bed,
With lush bee-peopled canopies o'er head,
They knew, and talking led me out to play,

Ah, they were gay, thy sisters! They were young,
And like the flowers, half divine with dew
Caught in their heads' loose roughened manes or flung
Forth in their frolic; nothing sad they knew.
But thou, thou hast the sob of many sorrows;
Gloom from a stormy night thy wet wing borrows;
Each pelting shower, like angry sudden tears,
Answers an urgent spurring which one hears
Driving thee on toward disenchanted morrows.

Alas, there is but wind and rain abroad,
Fatiguing warmth that tempts the sharded buds!
I would I were a god of stone to hoard,
As russet grange the summer's golden floods,
All that Greece knew of beauty in her youth:
And, vantaged, from an island temple's roof
Had watched a shore-road near across the sea,
Since young men on white horses buoyantly
Chanting rode by to meet the dawn of truth;—

A god who pays to-day no heed, a form
Though handless, footless, still in trance elate,
And tingling with old splendours that keep warm
(As echoes through a stone reverberate)
His comely stillness. As grand songs are held
Spell-bound within the temple where they swelled
Long after all the choristers have ceased,
My life would be immured, nor e'er released
To learn how men from such fair gods rebelled.

O Day, grey habited, thou too art sad!
Thou, too, art all too conscious of the past—
Of all those leaves that thy forerunners had
To bathe in, plunge in, fall to sleep at last,
Tired out like children, in! Thou, with thy rain
Pelting wet roofs and dripping boughs, would'st fain
Dance among flowers and make the roses bob;
Thou would'st from dells of thyme and clover rob
Scents to make sea-nymphs sniff and sniff again.

Then let us, Day, go friendly! help thou me,
Strengthen my feet and occupy my hands;
And from all clinging yearning set me free
To find in things the look that understands,
With mother-like alacrity, our need!
For nature is her children's friend indeed,
Who need not then be exiles anywhere;
But, loving beauty, still find beauty there,
As thou canst find thee comfort in thy speed.

Rough Minister of Life, thine infant hand
May once have ushered Psyche through Love's house.
Viewless and trembling didst thou later stand
And soothe her sleep with music? shy as mouse,
Evade but when, with many a skyey leap
From cloud-caps downward, came, with meteor sweep,
Her rosy husband?—Ah, attend my prayers,
Immediate as her unseen ministers,
Till hope grow real enough to clasp in sleep!

In sleep we can believe we, rapt and fain,
Full knowledge of illusive beauty store:—
In sleep we do not know ourselves, nor strain,
Like birds at sea and fainting ere the shore,
To reach a joy that, ever seeming near,
Lies far beyond our strength:—in sleep we hear,
As echoes hear, who do not weep at songs,
And unmoved watch, like stars, unpitied wrongs.
Then, Day, storm on till sleep be doubly dear!

Press on and shoulder up thy lagging clouds!
Invigour me! Born from thine energy,
And bright from thy despair, with leaves in crowds,
The spring shall be! at last the spring shall be!
Beauty shall like a day-dream brave the light—
A day-dream likelier than the dreams of night,
Surmised among thy sisters, Summer Days,—
When, 'mid birds singing, I will sing her praise
Exalting her with this thy strenuous might.

TO CHARLES RICKETTS

THE PANTHER

I.

Consider now the panther : Such the beast
On which the naked feet of Circe rest—
Her footstool wherein anger is increased
For ever, yet for ever is suppressed.

Sleek, powerful, and treacherous, and cowed,
With amber eyes like tears that watch a lamp—
A Queen's tears, thwarted by remembrance proud,
Clear cut as gold coins that her mint doth stamp.

How politic is grace in moods morose !
This smooth composure waits but our caress ;
'Tis pride put on to beggar love ; there glows
Knit with this strength some utter tenderness.

That blunt round paw, and padded glove-like palm !
How strange, if, there, like dulled assassin steel,
Sheathed claws wait ready ! Thus in forest calm
That cruel face the ferns' arched fronds conceal.

Then all is glowing, like deep-treasured glee :
E'en butterflies might settle on this coat ;
The shy gazelles may snuff full gingerly,—
Rich blossoms drown the odours they should note.

The holy baobab, with grey-blue stems
And aislèd vistas solemn as a church,
Denies this presence, and this life condemns ;
Its meek-eyed throngs would wrong it should they search.

A bound ! a scamper ! cry ! the sob of death !
And these claws open up the heart that pang

Had filled to bursting with a last gasped breath;
Warm blood is lapped, and fleshed is every fang.

Hereto conspired the beauty of the place,
Whose whole consent seemed given to life's ease.
Thus, by a garden walk, some poppy's grace
Brings down a child sultana to her knees;

Whose tall indifference next prompts her fond hand
To stoop its cup, where drowsy drops of dew
Roll and unite like quick-silver, or stand
In lustrous clots, then self-divide anew:

All, with a kiss, her human heart soon must
Attempt to possess; or quaff, with amorous sip,
Those wilful gems freighted with purple dust,
Where lurks a bee-sting venomed for her lip;

For while large petals closed at shut of eve,
The bee ceased not to gorge—could not burst free—
Fumed through the night, and stingless took his leave.
Thus rage in this beast pent left perfidy.

II.

But, lo! they yawn, those wide-hinged python jaws,
Unroof the rose-pink ivory-studded bed,
Where, like a languid flame, the lithe tongue draws
Its moist caress round gums and hollows red.

Dost, cloyed by rich meats spicy as the south,
Expose thy fevered palate to the cool,
Which, like snow melting in an emperor's mouth,
Helps make excess thy life's ironic rule?

Soft-coated, each curved ear seems some weird
flower,
Whose gulf with silken lashes gleams replete;
Such yield to let the fond fly, feasting, lower,
But close and stiffen to forbid retreat.

Thus dost thou draw our thought, by subtler hints,
Still further down the vortex of thy spell;
Lace-winged on delicate feet it onward glints—
A trickling tear—a soul hung over hell.

Those cushion brows, with sullen show of thought,
Deceive the eye; so emery, cloaked in state
Of some mock scarlet berry needle-wrought,
Maketh a young child marvel at its weight.

Can they be vacant? Can thy strong neck raise,
Without the aid of magic, thy full brain?
Of thee our child-thought in the mind delays,
Whence to dislodge it reason toils in vain.

The mystery of evil and its charm
Prevail, like beauty, radiant from thy form;
Thou art an enemy that can disarm
Man's arrogance, which like a swollen storm

Sweeps all creation with the tyrant force
Of his long hunger for congenial dreams;
Though he condemn thee, yet as in remorse
He thy soft pelt a couch for beauty deems—

Spreadeth it for the bride his ecstasy
Crowns Rose of Sharon, Lily of the valleys,—
Voweth it doth become her, likening thee,
Soul of the woods, to her, soul of his palace.

THE SERPENT

Hail Pytho! thou lithe length of gleaming plates,
War's choicely finished work and instrument,
Ingenious death's device! what groping hates
Hast thou taught to evolve their dull intent?

Men treasonous from thee learn subtle skill,
Thou vision! Beauteous devil of the grass,
Quick-sighted and close-thoughted, with a thrill
Through conscious souls thine undulations pass.

With nicety applying gliding bark
To rigid serpent forms of trunk or bough,
Thou climbest, and canst sling thy length or yark
Thy small malignant head, and in all how

Well demonstrate the perfect use of power
Wasteless, assured! yet liv'st thou sloth be-
gloomed;—
Canst strike like lightning swift, yet lose an hour
Watching, more still than indolent queen, thy
doomed.

Thou dancest,—art more fatal than our young
Women whose lascive forms yet tyrannise,—
Fascinatest with tiny flickering tongue,
And tigers quail before those beads thine eyes.

Five hundred forms thou hast, five hundred lengths
Stretched from a span long to a fabled mile;
As many hues as diverse mails; and strengths
Of venom to match every depth of guile.

The innocent blindworm like love's deceit,
And then the snake, the adder, viper, asp,

Whose bites like common injuries defeat
Not leechcraft, or the hand's repentant clasp.

Cobras there are too, as their mortal foes
Are, from whom poison can be taken; nay,
That can be charmed by the spell music throws;
Their friendly service shall the vermin slay.

There is the boa-constrictor, that ne'er will
Untighten, but envelopes and consumes;
And doubt absorbs with nightmare coils of ill
Hope and the room for heaven, while life fumes,

And sweet affections fret, and all looks drear
Till youth's fair morning seem a flux of dreams,
And time and space and power be symboled clear
In age-long serpents black, with baneful gleams,

Wound like the orbits wherein planets move
Through spectral convolutions purposeless,
Devoid of joy, devoid of warmth, of love,
The vast digesters of man's vain distress.—

Limbless and surging thine invasion sweeps
And loops itself the towering height of night;
Or through the water-conduit flows; or creeps
Like the round darkness of a pipe to light;

Emerged, proceedeth through the city dead,
Contented. Jungle vines have curtained all
Those pillared halls, where Solitude is fed,
And Stillness mute and dreadful hears thee crawl.

Rank vegetation preys on fane and tomb,
Muffles the tower and revels on the roof,

One woven extravagance of gaudy bloom
That, caved in o'er some court, has strained its woof.

There-through the sun's ray probes at sultry noon,
Across mosaic feels with scorching stealth.
Thou waitest its caress, approaching boon,
The slow sole kiss that helps thee love thyself.

All other lives are banished : not a beast
Dares venture near the hall where thou dost lie;
No ferret filches at thy gloomy feast,
Nor bird nor ape dare wake thee with a cry.

That kiss received which mindeth thee of hell,
That lonely gluttony and torpid trance,
That smouldering fury or alertness fell,
That grandeur when thou dost to kill advance,—

In all thy moods, thou virulence, we share :
Our forefathers have borne thee on their shields,
Symbol of passions trusted to prepare
The delectable transport that all carnage yields.

Among our thoughts thou threadest well-worn ways;
And, though the recognition of thee hurt,
Discreet, thou hast for thy redeeming grace
That charm efficiency must needs exert.

TO WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

THE PHANTOM OF A ROSE.*

" Ah," thought she, " if there
But one young man like this rose were
At my feet,—
Faultless, rich, and sweet,—
Deep with crimson as ocean with green,
With not one billowed petal flawed,
With scent that dims the beauty seen
With beauty known, till overawed
The domineering eyes relent
In the dark palace of mute scent,
And, humid, vail before the throne
Of sense more puissant than they own.

Then, my nimble wit quite routed,
I would yield to my prince Peerless;
With eyelids closed and blind heart fearless,
Kiss as though these lips ne'er pouted;
Act like the soul that has not doubted;
Then, then——" She yawned,
And let her head nest in her hair
Bunched on the back of her cushioned chair.

And now her consciousness has dawned
On dreamland, though she see that rose
Sway on the carpet where she dropped it,
Heave and float as though ripples propped it,

* Suggested by the dancing of M. Nijinsky and Mlle. Karsavina in *Le Spectre de la Rose*. A girl returning from the ball enters her bedroom, and wearily drops the rose she has unpinned from her dress, then sinks into a chair and dreams that a youth, the perfect emanation of that flower, invites her to dance with him.

Moored by a stalk that roots and grows;
Till soon like peony has globed
Room for the imperial soul enrobed
In manifold beauty. At length, it grand
As the whole peony clump might stand
High as your elbow, a single flower,
Hearth and home of that unknown power.

Now visibly as on chill air breathing
Fragrance transforms to a rosy mist;
Which halo-sphere befilms with wreathing
Trails of pink and amethyst.
As a breeze may cling to a single tree
Though all the wold around move not,
The petals unaccountably
Bestir themselves as each had got
A separate soul,—the smallest pair
From out the centre upward jet,
Poise and fold themselves on the air
Till jaunty like a cap they set
A little above four larger leaves
That into a velvet doublet round.
While, fallen and writhing on the ground,
Two, as when caterpillar weaves
Its sleep a hammock, are rolled, are turned,—
Have their ends shaped by witchery
Till crimson dancing pumps they be.
That visible lucent atmosphere
Solidifies, and young limbs appear:—
Under the cap a well-thatched head—
Under short curls quick-daring eyes;—
A young heart heaves that doublet red
And, lithe with aspiring enterprise,
Bare young arms forth from it spread.
Downward from it springy thighs
Tapering gloved in green hose go

To shapely knees and ankles gloved,
To young feet in twin shoes tip-toe.
Her eyes have seen, her heart has loved,
Ere he with doffed cap kneel to her.

" Beyond your senses' range,
" Where no intent is dumb,
" Lies the world from whence I come :
" Matter to thought is docile there,
" The soul express.
" To me seem strange,
" Grievous and comfortless
" These dead walls ever as they were,—
" This disobedient furniture,
" And obdurate insensitive lies,—
" These tissues that disguise.
" Less than your flesh our webs immure
" Emotion; we flush through apparel,
" Not crimson only, any hue;
" For body and vesture in colour and fashion
" Change with each sentiment and passion.
" Chameleons of the soul, we travel
" Fresh realms of life, or old review.
" We ponder silent, impalpable,
" Though as clear light visible
" Our presence all-pervading plays
" Round those who listen, talk or gaze :
" That hour when most are rapt in thought
" Glows brighter than a tropic noon;
" But summer twilight or the moon
" Reigns when converse is much sought;
" And darkness is unknown,
" For always many brood alone.

" I first became aware of you
" While wandering in a garden :

" From urgent stalk, anemone white,
" Close by me your distress burst bright.
" Against such eloquence who could harden?
" So into your rose my tenderness blent,—
" Then you enchanted over it bent.
" Our world can sometimes heighten this—
" Make a rose lovelier; and it is
" The earth-bound heart's clear loyal will
" Glads paradise more often still,—
" Breaks into bloom the rarest scented,
" Or sends a butterfly contented
" Sailing cerulean-winged through trees
" Whose sap is a long life's victories."

She ached to rise, she yearned to speak,
She strove to smile, but proved too weak;
As one who in quicksand neck-deep,
Wild with the will, has no power to leap;
Her limbs like a sunken ferry-boat
Lay logged with sleep and could not float.
She had danced too often at the ball,
She had fluttered, nodded, and smiled too much.
Tears formed in her heart: they did not fall.
Her thought, pitying her, could not touch
The spring of emotion; even a blush
Failed her shame; her body hung
Sullenly back like a dumb man's tongue.
Hers, that had welcomed so many young eyes,
Though this pair of them all she could least despise,
Greeted him not: yet, unoffended,
He rose, and danced a visible song;
With rhythmic gesture he contended
Against her trance, and proved so strong
That the grapes of his thought wore the bloom of his mood
While her soul tasted and understood.

" Lay aside this weight!
" A rarer substance thou dost own,
" More refined.
" This is but a cumbrous gown
" That loads and thwarts a soul elate,
" And, aging, disenchants the mind.
" Sweet one, thou art blind!

" Young, make thy escape,
" Ere touch less deft than Hope's have moulded
" Thee and come
" Where desire is unfolded
" In fulfilling hue and shape,
" And life in nought is marred or dumb;—
" Sweet, be venturesome!

" Single thou mayst do
" A greater deed than heroes who
" Strike tyrants dead:
" Or than the wise whose pains unlatch
" In Nature traps, and hold them wide,
" While they with shrewd description match
" The secret toil that throbs inside.
" Joy won and fled,
" On ills that courage erst made good
" Men think no more when facing worse;
" And those who most have understood
" Still front in ignorance Fate's curse;
" But those who on themselves turn round,
" Wrestle and win, transformed are crowned."

All vanished: and she felt the strain
Of the sense-impeded will
Through every tissue wrench in pain;
Then recover with a thrill
As her phantom slowly came

Steam-like from her nerveless frame.
First a ghostly head and shoulders
Where phosphorescence vaguely smoulders:
Next, opal-misted bust, flank, loins;
Then all that these to ankles joins;
Last, twin soft air-treading feet.
To itself that cloudlike form
Seemed alone in a blank void,
And lacked all thought of who might see it.
But as it realized life's warm
Likeness, and into beauty joyed
The presence of that rose-begotten
Youth, till then so far forgotten
Flushed back,—
And instant on her wish's track
Came its fulfilment—sumptuous veiling
Warm like air or water gliding
Over her, round her, down her, hiding
From neck to instep, and freely sailing
Voluminous after her when she moved.
Raising her lids, she first approved
The fabric, which was finely rayed—
Argent frequent on violet,
With seams outlined in beads of jet.
Then hers sought his eyes unafraid.
For self-expression aptly gifted
They join their hands and are uplifted.
While down-distancing she perceives
In reflex as from well's deep gloom
Walled and narrow, her own room:—
Her tiny bed, her glass, her press
Open, and in it her ball-dress,—
Her unknit figure over the chair
In petticoat with corset loose;
And, before its silken shoes
The crimson rose, as dropped, lay there,

On the white floorcloth a mere dot.
She saw, and knew these things had not
Been real conditions of her life,
But travesties born of a futile strife
Between her faculties and will
That wried the world perversely till
She cried against it, and was heard
In the flawless realm her soul preferred.

Happy where we long to live,
Clad by each glad thought, she in
Different jacket, skirt, or snood,
Strolls under trees where flowers give
" Good-day " to her (though not one spin
Or of the morrow ever think)
In such changed raiment that the wood
Smiles blue that yesterday glanced pink :
While cups that were have become bells,
And with their fashion changed their smells.
Her neighbourhood takes her elation,—
Nay, gives each mood due celebration.
Her dance is eloquent, and repose
Distils fresh dew on all she knows.
Then if she meet her friend, she sees
His trees come gliding between her trees,
When, sympathetic with their will,
Beneath them heaven heaves in a hill ;—
While his blooms twine their stalks with hers
Till a holt form round them that is theirs
In unique beauty. Distinct from his
Blossom and leaf and branch and stem :
Not more like hers that plant-life is :
But appropriate solely unto them.
And glimpsed beyond its boscage lie
Mountain, plain, sea-coast and sky ;—
For theirs are friends of open heart,

Leader, poet, saint and lover
Who in that world from this recover.—
Great natures, they health and thought impart,
Shape and make grand
The spirit's land;
Are filled and fill with admiration; —
Create and are their own creation.

TO GEORGE EDWARD MOORE

JUDITH

What have you in your apron wrapped?
Your face is fell with fright;
Your shadow hurries to catch you up,
Across the blank moonlight.

Why is your maid so white and wan?
What makes her so alert?
Why with her hands does she fumble thus
And wipe them on her skirt?

Ill to be borne your burden seems,
You fetch your breath so short;
Why do your eyes shine brighter far
Than, for the moon, they ought?

You take less heed of what you pass
Than one who walks in a dream;
The thing you hide so fills you out,
A woman with child you seem.

You take a turn, the town you see,
Your feet to run begin;
Is yours the strength which makes so strong
The supple thews of sin?

Why beat you now with naked hands?
On the gate they make no sound;
Your knuckles bleed; ah! your force fails;
You drop upon the ground.

Now you are raised upon your feet
And pulled within the town;
Wild light from flickering flames falls full
Upon your bloody gown;

Your throat is thrilled, your tongue is thick,
And triumph turns your lip;
As men tumultuous throng you round,
Each girds a sword to his hip:

But now by your imperious cries
Were they roused up from bed;
Now, high above your head, your hands
Hold Holofernes' head.

AT BETHEL

GABRIEL

Jacob, O Abdiel, the chosen man,
To whom most cheeringly we were revealed,
Ascending and descending ministers
That by a ladder came or went from heaven,—
Jacob has prospered, yet not ceased to err,
Impatient with slow time (his fond belief,
That cunning forwards not retards his ends,
Persisting) and has come, but trembling come,
From Haran back to Bethel : I with him.

Climbed unto fortune by base knavish tricks,
Lured on by darkly guessing ignorance,
Sullen, in torment, he was pleased to meet
Strong opposition from a steady wind :
So made his lonely way to higher ground.
Meanwhile flocks, herds, the camels, asses, dogs,
His hirelings, Leah's train and Rachel's train,
Spread, like the shade of some slow sailing cloud,
Athwart the valley, moved along its bed.

Ah, Abdiel, the light blinds none of us,
Its absence is no barrier to our gaze;
But man's dim eyes are foiled with too much light,
And in the darkness ache, they are so weak :
Not half of what he does doth he intend,
Therefore his purpose must be looked into.
So I was sent to be with him and know
His thought, and I was thrown in doubt—Oh yes!
For, though his ardour conquering obstacles
Has been so great that men astounded tell
How seven years appeared but a few days
Ere he might win the woman whom he loved;
Yet, compassed by deceits and trivial minds,

Himself did stoop to most unworthy shifts,
And his activity was clouded round
With cares enough, at last, to choke the soul.
Still effort, sprung from anger at himself,
This I perceived to be his saving grace :
Not heaven, not earth, not life doth he distrust,
But doth mistrust himself, and for good cause;
This is his virtue, this his victory.

Leant forward, shoulder edge-wise to the blast,
He made along the rolling sweeps of bleak
Sad, uncongenial upland, while more fierce
There in his mind a brother's probable wrath
Waxed to predestined certainty and stormed.
He suffered; and his agony intense
Absorbed me so, that inadvertently,
Foredone with ruth, almost I had been brought
Then to put on the like tormented form
And close with him in answer of his prayer,
That strongly yearned to engage some kindred force
And not be lost for ever in the whirl
Which his poor unencountered efforts made.
Although I judged this impulse ill-advised,
Still help, I felt, he needed : help I gave,
And met him there with half the host of heaven.
As, when the rain hath ceased some afternoon,
Between a low and deluge-threatening roof
And the wet shining grass that coats the hills,
A space of clarity, a wall of light
Appears as far as eye can reach, each way;
Thus, with anointed bodies and white spears,
My cohorts in his front emerged to view :
His raised hand shaped a pent-house for his eyes,
Silent he stood and gazed : I signal gave;
Straight like the boundless shadow when a cloud
Has travelled suddenly across the sun,

Our absence followed where our presence shone.
He said " This is God's host ! " and named the place.

ABDIEL

It must be, Gabriel, it must ! This awe,
Beholding energies he might express
Set forth a thousand times with one consent,
Doth show that man begins to know himself.

GABRIEL

For many days that vision had effect,
While still, as each eve closed, it seemed fair tents
Enriched a sister valley, ere he left
The heights to join his folk who camped below :—
Pavilions, as he deemed them, raised by powers
Watchful for his protection, so he might,
Provided for in the great scheme of things,
Without precaution, buoyantly secure,
Wend on as hand in hand with sun and moon,
Upheld in unison with quiring stars,
His right course found forever, and content.
I bade the wind to cease, unneeded then ;
But long it could not be ; the past surged back :
How could he trust those smiling distances ?
It seemed too easy and too magical !
Him gentle airs perplexed yet more than storms,
Who, fond, would pay a price for pleasant weather :
Acceptance of such generosity
Appeared foolhardy to his teething heart,
Fretful itself, supposing fretfulness
In circumambient peace ; the end for him
Loomed darkness, though the end indeed is light.

Wrapped in a head wind's fury he rejoiced
Like one escaped from peril, briefly brave
Ere fears grew gusty : yet an aid welled now,
Within him, for he thought on Rachel's face.

Perchance thou ofttimes in the spring hast seen
One tree all white, so tipped it is with buds,
Amongst the tender green of others stand :
O'er him her candour, where most use disguise,
Cast such sweet glamour as that tree exerts;
And he adored the future in her face.
Gardeners in sultry summer count on fruit,
Rememb'ring how their orchards once were white;
And recollection of her beauteous youth
Vouched now his ripening fulness joy and peace.
Alone and undistracted, greatly wrought,
While battling forward on those hills exposed,
He often summoned to his inward view
The beauty that once nerved him to succeed;
And, to that vision harmonised at once,
His hope spread forth and filled the future up,
Leaving no place for fear : so, from the east,
The magic passage of the light is made
Unto the extremest western verge—no sound,
No stir, attainment without effort—dawn !

ABDIEL

O Gabriel, man's words take hold on me;
To hear thee use them touches me to tears.
No stress like this has heavenly intercourse :
Thoughts, passing perfectly from mind to mind
In sacred quiet, mix not pain and pleasure;
Our songs are silence vivified with awe,
Our weeping is an ecstasy distilled.

GABRIEL

Even so, dear Abdiel, recall that day,
When first as in a mirror we in Adam
Beheld ourselves expressed in kneaded earth.—
Oh, what a rapt anxiety was ours
To watch his conscious body prove itself !
" Let beauty beautifully move ! " we sang,
Beholding him stand up in Paradise

Whose many trees were stirred with whispering sound :
The grass was dewy and his feet were pleased ;
His bosom next, conceiving ecstasy,
Filled with the summer wind, and he looked round ;
Vision was his ; but still he raised that hand,
So simple yet so manifold in power,
Creating by its very aptitude
The thought creative : herewith slow he felt
That breast which to his shoulders slanted up ;
To whose firm breadth succeeds the easy neck,
Mobile for stately carriage of his head ;
Then seemed to apprehend some heavenly truth,
And smiled, possessing what so soon proved lost.
Delighted to hope comprehended thus
In boon and sensuous symbol all we were,
With novel tremor, anxious a first time then,
We sang, and singing wept ; and still we sing
Weeping, as man's creation still unfolds.
Thus too this man is lyrically stirred
Recalling Rachel young and strange to him.
There, in his mind, I saw her as she came
On foot before her camels, in a stole
Straight, girdleless, of unbleached linen ; large
The opening at the neck in clear ellipse
Lay on her bosom, then swept up, and o'er
Each shoulder vanished ; mellow and warm that lake
Which but just billowed towards each hidden breast ;
Her neck erect seemed strangely slight to rear
The oval head massy with looped-up hair
Whose raven depth was crimpled vividly,
In graduated fineness like the track
Cast net-wise out upon some shining pond,
Whose ripple deepens inward from the curve
Its quickened dark forms on that bland expanse—
So from her smooth brow ruffled lobes of hair.

Guarded by grand shade-treasuring lids and brows,
Large pupils, arch for blackness, swam in milk;
The soft warm cheeks were nowhere flushed or pallid;
Her lips breath misted; and, dimpled about with shade,
There, like a rounded pebble, glowed her chin.
Long loose sleeves swaying wholly cloaked her arms;
While, brown, in green grass-woven sandals cased,
Her feet advancing filled her vesture up
With something like the music of her form,
Audible to the folds it set to move
In grave impressive measures.—Abdiel,
On picturing this, he every time believed,
Despite his stooping to ignoble craft,
That dreaméd promise would be all fulfilled,
Redoubling his best efforts to make way;
For, always strong, the gale would, now and then,
Increase in force so vastly he must halt.
Though difficult steps had yielded him content,
Stopped short or forced to cower near the ground,
The sweat of agony broke from his brow,
And, drying, left strange salt incrusted there.
" O thou that, warring with the furious wind,
Dost symbol forth the passion at thy heart,
That which like cold of serpents frightens thee,
Moist on thy smarting brow, that is thy sweat;
The dust, thy fingers marvel to find there,
Is salt brought from the glistening desert steppes;
That sound of scourges is from rags thou wearest,
With which the blast is violent, rousing them
To waspish wrath : O superstitious man,
Build not from these a portent ! " So I sighed,
For he prayed abjectly.—" A truce, O wind,
Let him take breath and know himself again ! "

Yet every eve, having regained the tents,
With brief decisive words he gave command,
Intent to thwart his brother of revenge;
Dividing first his company in two,
So, were one lost, the other might escape;
He sends a noble present on before;
A second soon of like well-chosen beasts;
A third anon.—It seemed not right to rest,
And he slept ill; his life, one over-wrought
Intense conjecture striving to foresee,
Was barred expansion towards his boys and girls;
E'en Rachel did not venture to draw near.

We came to the ford Jabbok as the dusk
Deepened, what time was left, between these brothers,
Not one day's journey. Could he rest there, then?
No, but by moonlight had his droves across;
The camels bore his wives and children o'er:
Then on the further bank the camp was pitched.
Yet he crossed not, but palely watched them safe,
Yearning to feel their ease to ford the stream
A presage and permission for himself.
And almost prayed he for a sudden squall
To rise, or accident to intervene
With danger from the water, from the winds,
From robber hordes: so did they but succeed
Against some expectation, this might work
Assurance clear, that he would be allowed
To plant his banished feet on native soil;
Since still instinctive terror held him back
And figured deities of local power,
That in a bounded tract are capable
To harm, and lie in wait for men unsound.
By such might Esau be preferred, he thought,
Whose claim was that of birth, and who besides

Was a swart hunter such as demons love.
These enemies were raised from heathen talk,
When awe which he had watched in alien eyes
Imposed on him despite his better sense.
Therefore last night, although they safe were crossed,
He climbed unto yon heights, but found no wind
With which to battle and relieve his soul.
I anxiously was near him and I knew
Almost he would go back : he strained, indeed,
On having crossed his folk and cattle o'er,
As to its moorings in some swollen stream
A shallop doth; and as it shakes and sighs
He moaned and shuddered under stress of fears,
Whose urgent current tugged against his hold—
His failing hold upon the future's strand,—
Intent to whirl him backward through the world,
An aimless man to dwindle evermore.

Then felt I such compulsion to assume
This human form, that very suddenly,
Between his arms outstretched in anguish cruel
To realise his failure setting in—
Yea, that same instant, when I saw with eyes,
His hands were clenched, his elbows bent, his brows
Contracted, and his hollow mouth and sockets
Drawn with sheer pain to own himself foredoomed!
Feeling this warm resistent wholesome flesh,
Bolt upright, almost touch his out-thrust breast,
He grappled, with a bitter cry of joy.
My thoughts, confused in their strait residence,
Doubted an instant whether by this act
I had not fallen as those others fell,
Who saw the daughters of men how fair they were,
And out of all proportion loved their beauty,
Begetting giants of enormous strength.—

The sympathy I felt came in such flood
That in the conformation of man's brain
It found no chamber, save the wards of passion,
Permitting of activity so swift,
Entire, and wholly centred on one end.
Anon that perfect sanity was mine
Which Enoch reached, what time he walked with God,
Grown up to be with us world without end.

With violence he bound me in his arms;
Then wrestled as it were for very life,
Swinging his weight this side or that of me
To throw or else compel me to my knees:
But I maintained impassively my ground.
And thus it was all night; his strength grew less,
Yet his will wearied not to conquer now
Or die; at last, I touched his thigh and caused
The sinew of its hollow to shrink short,
Marking him with full proof, that who opposed,
In rash and strenuous antagonism,
The righted image of his nature's health,
Must lame himself: this blindly yet he did—
Still, still though halt, he persevered in pain,
Though he was weeping, though his arms grew weak
Beyond belief, even as an infant's feeble!
Yet now at last sobs difficult and heavy
Shook me, no strength of his availed to shake,
And lo! we staggered, tottering both as one,
For his sobs ruled us in their violence.
Then prayed I him to let me go, since now
The day was breaking. He with gasps replied
" I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."
" What is thy name?" I said. " Jacob!" he moaned.
Then I, " Thou shalt be called Jacob no more
" But Israel; for like a prince hast thou

" Had power with God and men, and hast prevailed."
Silence ensued, but soon he craved yet more :
" Tell me thy name." " Wherefore is it that thou
After my name shouldst ask ? " was my reproof :
" Content thee that I bless thee; be thou blessèd."
Herewith I vanished from before his face.
ABDIEL
O Gabriel, such pains must man endure,
And, hard put to, close always on his fate :
Yea, here indeed the generous Esau errs,
Not anxious for the future, nor in throes
Of travail for perfection out of reach.
He met me, and mistook me for a youth;
Praised but my beauty, bid me to a meal,
Kissed me, and went his way, content and kind.

Thus angels sat, conversing with men's words,
Upon huge stones that strew the higher lawns;
While in the vale beneath spread Jacob's tents
And Esau's, side by side in slumber merged.
They were in beauty like to men of strength,
One younger, one mature, in perfect health;
Still we had felt perchance, those limbs had bathed
In sweeter waters than the best on earth.
Most lovely was the night, and they were glad
To take man's beauty to them for a while;
Yet vanished from their thrones before the dawn
Could rouse one sleeper in those numerous tents.

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OPINIONS ON MR STURGE MOORE'S POETRY

I. Mr Sturge Moore's volume of poems, "THE VINEDRESSER," discloses a more remarkable gift than any first book of verse of recent years. It has puzzled critics, who have contradicted each other more than usual about it. . . . Fertility and resourcefulness are excellent gifts, but they do not of themselves imply high poetry, and I think Mr Moore has higher claims than these. He has the creative imagination. . . . "The Vinedresser" has, by its poetic accent, reminded Mr Quiller-Couch of Matthew Arnold . . . but I think it recalls the author of the "Scholar Gipsy" in another quality also—in the felicity of its invention, in the discovery of a subject which, simple of itself as a summer's day, is coloured with the ripe complexion of life, and yields vistas into large and grave horizons. This is perhaps the most perfect thing in the book, but Mr Moore's loftiest strain is in the poem on Jacob wrestling with the Angel. Nothing could be more original or happy than the conception of the two Angels conversing together on the heights above the valley where Esau's and Jacob's tents are pitched. . . . But the whole poem should be read; it is woven of one tissue, not merely patched with beauties . . . the verse has the high integrity of a style "relying for effect on the weight of that which with entire fidelity it utters." Very few poems of recent years approach this in its combined originality, dignity and strength. It was, I think, scarcely mentioned by any reviewers.—Mr Laurence Binyon in *The Literary Year Book*, 1899.

II. ON "POEMS," 1906

There are many pleasant poets of our time who might never have written verse at all but for Keats or Shelley or Mr Swinburne. If anything could have prevented Mr Moore from writing verse it would have been the overshadowing eminence of great men such as these. He is so determined not to get any advantage from the facility which they have taught to the world, and he would certainly rather write prose or not write at all than risk losing the identity of his own thought in their borrowed glories. . . . Mr Moore is not only a poet but a philosopher. The experience of life moves him to meditation as well as to delight and to sorrow. . . . The bribe of inspiration is too great for most poets to hesitate about accepting it on any terms. When an ecstasy comes to them they will exploit it for all that it is worth. They are apt, indeed, to cultivate an ecstatic habit of mind as one of the conditions of their art. Mr Moore refuses to do this. We can trust him not to cry poetry before he has found it, and when he has found it our own trust in life is fortified by his success.—*The Speaker.*

III. ON "THE ROUT OF THE AMAZONS"

[In the volume of Poems, 1906, and also issued separately]

I would venture the assertion that, at least since the "Artemis Prologizes" of Browning, there has been no passage of sustained

poetical harmony at all to be compared with this ; and, indeed, Browning's poem is much its inferior in the most essential qualities of beauty and inspiration.—R. C. Trevelyan in *The Independent Review*.

IV. In the beginning his verse strikes one as abnormally harsh and awkward, like Donne's, redundant with consonants. Yet as the ear becomes accustomed to his curious movement this impression wholly wears away, and we become aware of a strongly marked beat that falls as insistently upon the ear as the march of the staves in "Beowulf." . . . This startling subtlety of thought and image runs through all three of Mr Moore's books ; it often gleams into a flash of natural humour, and at the end it seems to have put before us something very like an original view of modern life.—*The Nation*.

V. ON "THE GAZELLES"

[In the volume of Poems, 1906, and also issued separately]

Now here is the opening of a rather long poem. And it is essentially the right opening—the wording not too close, the frame of the picture, the landscape, put in with simple words, the phrasing not intricate, the rhythm running easily. And, at the right moment, the heroes—the gazelles—appear. It reminds me, in fact, of the opening of the best of Maupassant's long contes—"The Field of Olives." And in all these respects the poem maintains its level to the end.—Ford Madox Hueffer in *The Academy*.

VI. ON "PAN'S PROPHECY"

[In the volume of Poems, 1906, and also issued separately]

The paradise which Mr Moore creates for the home of his thoughts in "Pan's Prophecy" reminds one of the world painted in Piero di Cosimo's death of Procis. It has the same quaint and intense detail. It conveys the same sense of the stories of one age relished and retold by the very different mind of another age far remote from it ; and it is filled with the same fantastically real tenderness. —Clutton Brock in *The Speaker*.

VII. ON "THESEUS" AND "MEDEA"

[In the volume of Poems, 1906, and also issued separately]

His figures are drawn as clearly as if no one had ever heard of them before ; and, indeed, they come so strangely from his brain that they are truly new. Tennyson relies continually upon Homer and Virgil in his "Ulysses," and had we never read of the Ithacan before, he would be but a ghost, a type, an allegory. Nothing could be more different than Mr Sturge Moore's method. We will illustrate it first by a quotation from his "Theseus" which incidentally shows his unique picturesqueness, a picturesqueness which is far clearer and more effective than Rossetti's, of which some may be reminded.—*Daily Chronicle*.

VIII. ON AN ODE

[In the volume of Poems, 1906, and also issued separately]

"For Dark Days" is a beautiful poem, one of the most beautiful, in its total movement, that Mr Moore has written, and at the same

time more personally passionate than he is wont to be. It is a cry from the heart inspired by the head ; and it suggests that possibly he will find his way to a perfect expression of himself just by the completer emotional realisation of his thoughts. There is no fear that he will scold or pose ; he is at once too choice and too strong ; but in this ode, which rises from sadness to defiance, and ends in comfortable words of strength, we seem to catch the fusing passion that hides the process and removes all trace of the effort.—*The Times Literary Supplement.*

IX. ON "THE CENTAUR'S BOOTY"

[In the volume of Poems, 1906, and also issued separately]
Mr Moore's best work is drenched in beauty—he can take these old themes and stories, and tell them over again, in a manner that is full of the great tradition and carries its echoes of the past, recalling the Greek way of telling them, and the romantic way too ; yet which is no mere copy of either, but his own manner, and one that has the right touch of our day about it. Sometimes he reminds one of such work as that wonderful drawing of Edward Calvert's " Arcadian Shepherds moving their Flocks by Night," sometimes of Mr C. H. Shannon's beautiful lithographs ; but while as intensely Greek and intensely romantic as either Calvert or Mr Shannon, he is more modern than either in the handling of these ancient things.—*The Times Literary Supplement.*

X. ON "POEMS," 1906

We shall not wake to-morrow feeling that we have been perhaps a little morbid overnight ; we shall take this insight and this humour with us all day and be the stronger for it. The thought itself will wear ; it is neither new nor old ; it was not new in the days of Nimrod, it is not out of date in the generation of Nietsche.—Henry Newbolt in *The Monthly Review.*

XI. ON "MARIAMNE"

He takes nothing for granted, and never for a moment leans upon convention or tradition. The result is that his play is complete in itself, all " carved out of the carver's brain," and to understand and admire it no historic knowledge is necessary. . . . It is a study of psychology richly coloured by a study of manners and costume, and this second element, though always subsidiary and relevant, is itself good enough to make a good book if not a good play. That it is a good play we have little doubt, though it is meant for the stage, which alone can fully approve it. . . . The trial scene is a piece of painting and character study which would save a poor play, but does not stand out unduly in the admirable whole. Mr Moore's great triumph is to appeal directly at every point of the play to the eye and the mind together.—Edward Thomas in *The Bookman.*

XII. ON "A SICILIAN IDYLL"

There are not many names nowadays which can be taken as warranty that everything they sign will be marked by peculiar

and unmistakable excellence ; but Mr Sturge Moore's name is certainly one of them. For this . . . work is perhaps more truly modern than any other poetry which is being written to-day . . . it is also the work of a poet who can, when it is needed, perfectly resist his own time ; . . . the sensuous element is never thrust forward in patches, but rather is woven into the whole texture. . . . Whatever one may say . . . the " Sicilian Idyll " is a piece of completely organised poetic unity ; a thing made of tragedy and gaiety, humour and pathos, passionate questioning of the " brute fact " of human existence and passionate unquestioning delight in the radiant beauty of life's surroundings.—Lascelles Abercrombie in *The Nation.*

ON " JUDITH "

The sensuous impression given by " Judith " is . . . very fittingly, a sort of dim, suffused gorgeousness ; exactly how it is imparted it is not easy to say, for Mr Moore's phrasing, though often keen with unexpected beauty, is never gorgeous. As a play . . . it is admirably constructed—how admirably perhaps only a stage performance could show ; and that on the English stage, at any rate, is probably a long way off.—Lascelles Abercrombie in *The Nation,* 27th January 1912.

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